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HARPER'S THISTLE EDITION

OF

THE WAVERLEY NOVELS

COMPLETE IN FORTY-EIGHT VOLUMES

VOLUME XLVI

CASTLE DANGEROUS.

THE WAVERLEY NOVELS

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS

BY

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VOL. II.

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
1900

Fiction
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COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

She comes! she comes! in all the charms of youth,
Unequall'd love, and unsuspected truth!

HEREWARD was not long in tracing the cry through the wooded walks, when a female rushed into his arms; alarmed, as it appeared, by Sylvan, who was pursuing her closely. The figure of Hereward, with his axe uplifted, put an instant stop to his career, and with a terrified note of his native cries, he withdrew into the thickest of the adjoining foliage.

Relieved from his presence, Hereward had time to look at the female whom he had succoured: She was arrayed in a dress which consisted of several colours, that which predominated being a pale yellow; her tunic was of this colour, and, like a modern gown,

was closely fitted to the body, which, in the present case, was that of a tall, but very well-formed person. The mantle, or upper garment, in which the whole figure was wrapped, was of fine cloth; and the kind of hood which was attached to it having flown back with the rapidity of her motion, gave to view the hair beautifully adorned and twisted into a natural head-dress. Beneath this natural head-gear appeared a face pale as death, from a sense of the supposed danger, but which preserved, even amidst its terrors, an exquisite degree of beauty.

Hereward was thunderstruck at this apparition. The dress was neither Grecian, Italian, nor of the costume of the Franks ;—it was *Saxon!*—connected by a thousand tender remembrances with Hereward's childhood and youth. The circumstance was most extraordinary. Saxon women, indeed, there were in Constantinople, who had united their fortunes with those of the Varangians; and those often chose to wear their national dress in the city, because the character and conduct of their husbands secured them a degree of respect, which they might not have met with either as Grecian or as stranger females of a similar rank. But almost all these were personally known to Hereward. It was no time, however, for reverie—he was himself in danger—the situation of the young female might be no safe one. In every case, it was judicious to quit the more public part of the gardens; he therefore lost not a moment in conveying the fainting Saxon to a retreat he fortunately was acquainted with. A covered path, obscured by vegetation, led through a species of labyrinth to an

artificial cave, at the bottom of which, half-paved with shells, moss, and spar, lay the gigantic and half-recumbent statue of a river deity, with its usual attributes—that is, its front crowned with water-lilies and sedges, and its ample hand half resting upon an empty urn. The attitude of the whole figure corresponded with the motto,—"I SLEEP—AWAKE ME NOT."

"Accursed relic of paganism," said Hereward, who was, in proportion to his light, a zealous Christian—"brutish stock or stone that thou art! I will wake thee with a vengeance." So saying, he struck the head of the slumbering deity with his battle-axe, and deranged the play of the fountain so much that the water began to pour into the basin.

"Thou art a good block, nevertheless," said the Varangian, "to send succour so needful to the aid of my poor countrywoman. Thou shalt give her also, with thy leave, a portion of thy couch." So saying, he arranged his fair burden, who was as yet insensible, upon the pedestal where the figure of the River God reclined. In doing this, his attention was recalled to her face, and again and again he was thrilled with an emotion of hope, but so excessively like fear, that it could only be compared to the flickering of a torch, uncertain whether it is to light up or be instantly extinguished. With a sort of mechanical attention, he continued to make such efforts as he could to recall the intellect of the beautiful creature before him. His feelings were those of the astronomical sage, to whom the rise of the moon slowly restores the contemplation of that Heaven,

which is at once, as a Christian, his hope of felicity, and, as a philosopher, the source of his knowledge. The blood returned to her cheek, and reanimation, and even recollection, took place in her earlier than in the astonished Varangian.

"Blessed Mary!" she said, "have I indeed tasted the last bitter cup, and is it here where thou reunitest thy votaries after death!—Speak, Hereward! if thou art aught but an empty creature of the imagination!—speak, and tell me, if I have but dreamed of that monstrous ogre!"

"Collect thyself, my beloved Bertha," said the Anglo-Saxon, recalled by the sound of her voice, "and prepare to endure what thou livest to witness, and thy Hereward survives to tell. That hideous thing exists—nay, do not start, and look for a hiding-place—thy own gentle hand with a riding rod is sufficient to tame its courage. And am I not here, Bertha? Wouldst thou wish another safeguard?"

"No—no," exclaimed she, seizing on the arm of her recovered lover. "Do I not know you now?"

"And is it but now you know me, Bertha?" said Hereward.

"I suspected before," she said, casting down her eyes; "but I know with certainty that mark of the boar's tusk."

Hereward suffered her imagination to clear itself from the shock it had received so suddenly, before he ventured to enter upon present events, in which there was so much both to doubt and to fear. He permitted her, therefore, to recall to her memory all the circumstances of the rousing the hideous animal, as-

sisted by the tribes of both their fathers. She mentioned in broken words the flight of arrows discharged against the boar by young and old, male and female, and how her own, well aimed, but feeble shaft, wounded him sharply; she forgot not how, incensed at the pain, the creature rushed upon her as the cause, laid her palfrey dead upon the spot, and would soon have slain her, had not Hereward, when every attempt failed to bring his horse up to the monster, thrown himself from his seat, and interposed personally between the boar and Bertha. The battle was not decided without a desperate struggle; the boar was slain, but Hereward received the deep gash upon his brow which she whom he had saved now recalled to her memory. "Alas!" she said, "what have we been to each other since that period? and what are we now, in this foreign land?"

"Answer for thyself, my Bertha," said the Varangian, "if thou canst;—and if thou canst with truth say that thou art the same Bertha who vowed affection to Hereward, believe me, it were sinful to suppose that the saints have brought us together with a view of our being afterwards separated."

"Hereward," said Bertha, "you have not preserved the bird in your bosom safer than I have; at home or abroad, in servitude or in freedom, amidst sorrow or joy, plenty or want, my thought was always on the troth I had plighted to Hereward at the stone of Odin."

"Say no more of that," said Hereward; "it was an impious rite, and good could not come of it."

"Was it then so impious?" she said, the unbidden

tear rushing into her large blue eye. "Alas! it was a pleasure to reflect that Hereward was mine by that solemn engagement!"

"Listen to me, my Bertha," said Hereward, taking her hand: "We were then almost children; and though our vow was in itself innocent, yet it was so far wrong, as being sworn in the presence of a dumb idol, representing one who was, while alive, a bloody and cruel magician. But we will, the instant an opportunity offers itself, renew our vow before a shrine of real sanctity, and promise suitable penance for our ignorant acknowledgment of Odin, to propitiate the real Deity, who can bear us through those storms of adversity which are like to surround us."

Leaving them for the time to their love-discourse, of a nature pure, simple, and interesting, we shall give, in a few words, all that the reader needs to know of their separate history between the boar's hunt and the time of their meeting in the gardens of Agelastes.

In that doubtful state experienced by outlaws, Waltheoff, the father of Hereward, and Engelred, the parent of Bertha, used to assemble their unsubdued tribes, sometimes in the fertile regions of Devonshire, sometimes in the dark wooded solitudes of Hampshire, but as much as possible within the call of the bugle of the famous Edric the Forester, so long leader of the insurgent Saxons. The chiefs we have mentioned were among the last bold men who asserted the independence of the Saxon race of England; and like their captain Edric, they were generally known by the name of Foresters, as men who lived

by hunting, when their power of making excursions was checked and repelled. Hence they made a step backwards in civilization, and became more like to their remote ancestors of German descent, than they were to their more immediate and civilized predecessors, who, before the battle of Hastings, had advanced considerably in the arts of civilized life.

Old superstitions had begun to revive among them, and hence the practice of youths and maidens plighting their troth at the stone circles dedicated, as it was supposed, to Odin, in whom, however, they had long ceased to nourish any of the sincere belief which was entertained by their heathen ancestors.

In another respect these outlaws were fast resuming a striking peculiarity of the ancient Germans. Their circumstances naturally brought the youth of both sexes much together, and by early marriage, or less permanent connections, the population would have increased far beyond the means which the outlaws had to maintain, or even to protect themselves. The laws of the Foresters, therefore, strictly enjoined that marriages should be prohibited until the bridegroom was twenty-one years complete. Future alliances were indeed often formed by the young people, nor was this discountenanced by their parents, provided that the lovers waited until the period when the majority of the bridegroom should permit them to marry. Such youths as infringed this rule, incurred the dishonourable epithet of *niddering*, or worthless, —an epithet of a nature so insulting, that men were known to have slain themselves, rather than endure life under such opprobrium. But the offenders were

HEREWARD AND BERTHA IN THE PHILOSOPHER'S GARDEN.

very few amidst a race trained in moderation and self-denial; and hence it was that woman, worshipped for so many years like something sacred, was received, when she became the head of a family, into the arms and heart of a husband who had so long expected her, was treated as something more elevated than the mere idol of the moment; and feeling the rate at which she was valued, endeavoured by her actions to make her life correspond with it.

It was by the whole population of these tribes, as well as their parents, that after the adventure of the boar hunt, Hereward and Bertha were considered as lovers whose alliance was pointed out by Heaven, and they were encouraged to approximate as much as their mutual inclinations prompted them. The youths of the tribe avoided asking Bertha's hand at the dance, and the maidens used no maidenly entreaty or artifice to detain Hereward beside them, if Berthawas present at the feast. They clasped each other's hands through the perforated stone, which they called the altar of Odin, though later ages have ascribed it to the Druids, and they implored that if they broke their faith to each other, their fault might be avenged by the twelve swords which were now drawn around them during the ceremony by as many youths, and that their misfortunes might be so many as twelve maidens, who stood around with their hair loosened, should be unable to recount, either in prose or verse.

The torch of the Saxon Cupid shone for some years as brilliant as when it was first lighted. The time, however, came when they were to be tried by

adversity, though undeserved by the perfidy of either. Years had gone past, and Hereward had to count with anxiety how many months and weeks were to separate him from the bride, who was beginning already by degrees to shrink less shyly from the expressions and caresses of one who was soon to term her all his own. William Rufus, however, had formed a plan of totally extirpating the Foresters, whose implacable hatred, and restless love of freedom, had so often disturbed the quiet of his kingdom, and despised his forest laws. He assembled his Norman forces, and united to them a body of Saxons who had submitted to his rule. He thus brought an overpowering force upon the bands of Waltheoff and Engelred, who found no resource but to throw the females of their tribe, and such as could not bear arms, into a convent dedicated to Saint Augustin, of which Kenelm their relation was prior, and then turning to the battle, vindicated their ancient valour by fighting it to the last. Both the unfortunate chiefs remained dead on the field, and Hereward and his brother had well-nigh shared their fate; but some Saxon inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who adventured on the field of battle, which the victors had left bare of every thing save the booty of the kites and the ravens, found the bodies of the youths still retaining life. As they were generally well known and much beloved by these people, Hereward and his brother were taken care of till their wounds began to close, and their strength returned. Hereward then heard the doleful news of the death of his father and Engelred.

His next inquiry was concerning his betrothed bride and her mother. The poor inhabitants could give him little information. Some of the females who had taken refuge in the convent, the Norman knights and nobles had seized upon as their slaves, and the rest, with the monks who had harboured them, were turned adrift, and their place of retreat was completely sacked and burnt to the ground.

Half-dead himself at hearing these tidings, Hereward sallied out, and at every risk of death, for the Saxon Foresters were treated as outlaws, commenced inquiries after those so dear to him. He asked concerning the particular fate of Bertha and her mother, among the miserable creatures who yet hovered about the neighbourhood of the convent, like a few half-scorched bees about their smothered hive. But, in the magnitude of their own terrors, none had retained eyes for their neighbours, and all that they could say was, that the wife and daughter of Engelred were certainly lost; and their imaginations suggested so many heart-rendering details to this conclusion, that Hereward gave up all thoughts of farther researches, likely to terminate so uselessly and so horribly.

The young Saxon had been all his life bred up in a patriotic hatred to the Normans, who did not, it was likely, become dearer to his thoughts in consequence of this victory. He dreamed at first of crossing the Strait, to make war against the hated enemy in their own country; but an idea so extravagant did not long retain possession of his mind. His fate was decided by his encountering an aged palmer, who knew, or pretended to have known, his father,

and to be a native of England. This man was a disguised Varangian, selected for the purpose, possessed of art and dexterity, and well provided with money. He had little difficulty in persuading Hereward, in the hopeless desolation of his condition, to join the Varangian Guard, at this moment at war with the Normans, under which name it suited Hereward's prepossessions to represent the Emperor's wars with Robert Guiscard, his son Bohemond, and other adventurers, in Italy, Greece, or Sicily. A journey to the East also inferred a pilgrimage, and gave the unfortunate Hereward the chance of purchasing pardon for his sins by visiting the Holy Land. In gaining Hereward, the recruiter also secured the services of his elder brother, who had vowed not to separate from him.

The high character of both brothers for courage induced this wily agent to consider them as a great prize, and it was from the memoranda respecting the history and character of those whom he recruited, in which the elder had been unreservedly communicative, that Agelastes picked up the information respecting Hereward's family and circumstances, which, at their first secret interview, he made use of to impress upon the Varangian the idea of his supernatural knowledge. Several of his companions in arms were thus gained over; for it will easily be guessed, that these memorials were intrusted to the keeping of Achilles Tatius, and he, to further their joint purposes, imparted them to Agelastes, who thus obtained a general credit for supernatural knowledge among these ignorant men. But Here-

ward's blunt faith and honesty enabled him to shun the snare.

Such being the fortunes of Hereward, those of Bertha formed the subject of a broken and passionate communication between the lovers, broken like an April day, and mingled with many a tender caress, such as modesty permits to lovers when they meet again unexpectedly after a separation, which threatened to be eternal. But the story may be comprehended in few words. Amid the general sack of the monastery, an old Norman knight seized upon Bertha as his prize. Struck with her beauty, he designed her as an attendant upon his daughter, just then come out of the years of childhood, and the very apple of her father's eye, being the only child of his beloved countess, and sent late in life to bless their marriage bed. It was in the order of things that the lady of Aspramonte, who was considerably younger than the knight, should govern her husband, and that Brenhilda, their daughter, should govern both her parents.

The Knight of Aspramonte, however, it may be observed, entertained some desire to direct his young offspring to more feminine amusements than those which began already to put her life frequently in danger. Contradiction was not to be thought of, as the good old knight knew by experience. The influence and example of a companion a little older than herself might be of some avail, and it was with this view that, in the confusion of the sack, Aspramonte seized upon the youthful Bertha. Terrified to the utmost degree, she clung to her mother, and the

Knight of Aspramonte, who had a softer heart than was then usually found under a steel cuirass, moved by the affliction of the mother and daughter, and recollecting that the former might also be a useful attendant upon his lady, extended his protection to both, and conveying them out of the press, paid the soldiers who ventured to dispute the spoil with him, partly in some small pieces of money, and partly in dry blows with the reverse of his lance.

The well-natured knight soon after returned to his own castle, and being a man of an orderly life and virtuous habits, the charming beauties of the Saxon virgin, and the more ripened charms of her mother, did not prevent their travelling in all honour as well as safety to his family fortress, the castle of Aspramonte. Here such masters as could be procured were got together to teach the young Bertha every sort of female accomplishment, in the hope that her mistress, Brenhilda, might be inspired with a desire to partake in her education; but although this so far succeeded, that the Saxon captive became highly skilled in such music, needle-work, and other female accomplishments as were known to the time, yet her young mistress, Brenhilda, retained the taste for those martial amusements which had so sensibly grieved her father, but to which her mother, who herself had nourished such fancies in her youth, readily gave sanction.

The captives, however, were kindly treated. Brenhilda became infinitely attached to the young Anglo-Saxon, whom she loved less for her ingenuity in arts, than for her activity in field sports, to

which her early state of independence had trained her.

The Lady of Aspramonte was also kind to both the captives; but, in one particular, she exercised a piece of petty tyranny over them. She had imbibed an idea, strengthened by an old doting father-confessor, that the Saxons were heathens at that time, or at least heretics, and made a positive point with her husband that the bondswoman and girl who were to attend on her person and that of her daughter, should be qualified for the office by being anew admitted into the Christian church by baptism.

Though feeling the falsehood and injustice of the accusation, the mother had sense enough to submit to necessity, and received the name of Martha in all form at the altar, to which she answered during the rest of her life.

But Bertha shewed a character upon this occasion inconsistent with the general docility and gentleness of her temper. She boldly refused to be admitted anew into the pale of the Church, of which her conscience told her she was already a member, or to exchange for another the name originally given her at the font. It was in vain that the old knight commanded, that the lady threatened, and that her mother advised and entreated. More closely pressed in private by her mother, she let her motive be known, which had not before been suspected. "I know," she said, with a flood of tears, "that my father would have died ere I was subjected to this insult; and then —who shall assure me that vows which were made to the Saxon Bertha, will be binding if a French Agatha

be substituted in her stead? They may banish me," she said, "or kill me if they will, but if the son of Waltheoff should again meet with the daughter of Engelred, he shall meet that Bertha whom he knew in the forests of Hampton."

All argument was in vain; the Saxon maiden remained obstinate, and to try to break her resolution, the lady of Aspramonte at length spoke of dismissing her from the service of her young mistress, and banishing her from the castle. To this also she had made up her mind, and she answered firmly though respectfully, that she would sorrow bitterly at parting with her young lady; but as to the rest, she would rather beg under her own name, than be recreant to the faith of her fathers, and condemn it as heresy, by assuming one of Frank origin. The Lady Brenhilda, in the meantime, entered the chamber, where her mother was just about to pass the threatened doom of banishment.—"Do not stop for my entrance, madam," said the dauntless young lady; "I am as much concerned in the doom which you are about to pass as is Bertha; if she crosses the drawbridge of Aspramonte as an exile, so will I, when she has dried her tears, of which even my petulance could never wring one from her eyes. She shall be my squire and body attendant, and Launcelot, the bard, shall follow with my spear and shield."

"And you will return, mistress," said her mother, "from so foolish an expedition, before the sun sets?"

"So Heaven further me in my purpose, lady," answered the young heiress, "the sun shall neither rise

nor set that sees us return, till this name of Bertha, and of her mistress, Brenhilda, are wafted as far as the trumpet of fame can sound them.—Cheer up, my sweetest Bertha!" she said, taking her attendant by the hand, "if Heaven hath torn thee from thy country and thy plighted troth, it hath given thee a sister and a friend, with whom thy fame shall be for ever blended."

The Lady of Aspramonte was confounded: She knew that her daughter was perfectly capable of the wild course which she had announced, and that she herself, even with her husband's assistance, would be unable to prevent her following it. She passively listened, therefore, while the Saxon matron, formerly Urica, but now Martha, addressed her daughter. "My child," she said, "as you value honour, virtue, safety, and gratitude, soften your heart towards your master and mistress, and follow the advice of a parent, who has more years and more judgment than you. And you, my dearest young lady, let not your lady-mother think that an attachment to the exercises you excel in, has destroyed in your bosom filial affection, and a regard to the delicacy of your sex!—As they seem both obstinate, madam," continued the matron, after watching the influence of this advice upon the young women, "perhaps, if it may be permitted me, I could state an alternative, which might, in the meanwhile, satisfy your ladyship's wishes, accommodate itself to the wilfulness of my obstinate daughter, and answer the kind purpose of her generous mistress." The Lady of Aspramonte signed to the Saxon matron to proceed. She went on accor-

dingly: "The Saxons, dearest lady, of the present day, are neither pagans nor heretics; they are, in the time of keeping Easter, as well as in all other disputable doctrine, humbly obedient to the Pope of Rome; and this our good Bishop well knows, since he upbraided some of the domestics for calling me an old heathen. Yet our names are uncouth in the ears of the Franks, and bear, perhaps, a heathenish sound. If it be not exacted that my daughter submit to a new rite of baptism, she will lay aside her Saxon name of Bertha upon all occasions while in your honourable household. This will cut short a debate which, with forgiveness, I think is scarce of importance enough to break the peace of this castle. I will engage that, in gratitude for this indulgence of a trifling scruple, my daughter, if possible, shall double the zeal and assiduity of her service to her young lady."

The Lady of Aspramonte was glad to embrace the means which this offer presented, of extricating herself from the dispute with as little compromise of dignity as could well be. "If the good Lord Bishop approved of such a compromise," she said, "she would for herself withdraw her opposition." The prelate approved accordingly, the more readily that he was informed that the young heiress desired earnestly such an agreement. The peace of the castle was restored, and Bertha recognised her new name of Agatha as a name of service, but not a name of baptism.

One effect the dispute certainly produced, and that was, increasing in an enthusiastic degree the love of

Bertha for her young mistress. With that amiable failing of attached domestics and humble friends, she endeavoured to serve her as she knew she loved to be served; and therefore indulged her mistress in those chivalrous fancies which distinguished her even in her own age, and in ours would have rendered her a female Quixote. Bertha, indeed, never caught the frenzy of her mistress; but, strong, willing, and able-bodied, she readily qualified herself to act upon occasion as a squire of the body to a Lady Adventuress; and, accustomed from her childhood to see blows dealt, blood flowing, and men dying, she could look with an undazzled eye upon the dangers which her mistress encountered, and seldom teased her with remonstrances, unless when those were unusually great. This compliance on most occasions, gave Bertha a right of advice upon some, which, always given with the best intentions and at fitting times, strengthened her influence with her mistress, which a course of conduct savouring of diametrical opposition would certainly have destroyed.

A few more words serve to announce the death of the Knight of Aspramonte—the romantic marriage of the young lady with the Count of Paris—their engagement in the crusade—and the detail of events with which the reader is acquainted.

Hereward did not exactly comprehend some of the later incidents of the story, owing to a slight strife which arose between Bertha and him during the course of her narrative. When she avowed the girlish simplicity with which she obstinately refused

to change her name, because, in her apprehension, the troth-plight betwixt her and her lover might be thereby prejudiced, it was impossible for Hereward not to acknowledge her tenderness, by snatching her to his bosom, and impressing his grateful thanks upon her lips. She extricated herself immediately from his grasp, however, with cheeks more crimsoned in modesty than in anger, and gravely addressed her lover thus: "Enough, enough, Hereward! this may be pardoned to so unexpected a meeting; but we must in future remember, that we are probably the last of our race; and let it not be said, that the manners of their ancestors were forgotten by Hereward and by Bertha; think, that though we are alone, the shades of our fathers are not far off, and watch to see what use we make of the meeting, which, perhaps, their intercession has procured us."

"You wrong me, Bertha," said Hereward, "if you think me capable of forgetting my own duty and yours, at a moment when our thanks are due to Heaven, to be testified very differently than by infringing on its behests, or the commands of our parents. The question is now, How we shall rejoin each other when we separate? since separate, I fear, we must."

"O! do not say so!" exclaimed the unfortunate Bertha.

"It must be so," said Hereward, "for a time; but I swear to thee by the hilt of my sword, and the handle of my battle-axe, that blade was never so true to shaft as I will be to thee!"

"But wherefore, then, leave me, Hereward?" said

the maiden; "and oh! wherefore not assist me in the release of my mistress?"

"Of thy mistress!" said Hereward. "Shame! that thou canst give that name to mortal woman!"

"But she *is* my mistress," answered Bertha, "and by a thousand kind ties which cannot be separated so long as gratitude is the reward of kindness."

"And what is her danger," said Hereward; "what is it she wants, this accomplished lady whom thou callest mistress?"

"Her honour, her life, are alike in danger," said Bertha. "She has agreed to meet the Cæsar in the field, and he will not hesitate, like a base-born miscreant, to take every advantage in the encounter, which, I grieve to say, may in all likelihood be fatal to my mistress."

"Why dost thou think so?" answered Hereward. "This lady has won many single combats, unless she is belied, against adversaries more formidable than the Cæsar."

"True," said the Saxon maiden; "but you speak of things that passed in a far different land, where faith and honour are not empty sounds; as, alas! they seem but too surely to be here. Trust me, it is no girlish terror which sends me out in this disguise of my country dress, which, they say, finds respect at Constantinople: I go to let the chiefs of the Crusade know the peril in which the noble lady stands, and trust to their humanity, to their religion, to their love of honour, and fear of disgrace, for assistance in this hour of need; and now that I have had the bless-

ing of meeting with thee, all besides will go well—all will go well—and I will back to my mistress and report whom I have seen."

"Tarry yet another moment, my recovered treasure!" said Hereward, "and let me balance this matter carefully. This Frankish lady holds the Saxons like the very dust that thou brushest from the hem of her garment. She treats—she regards—the Saxons as pagans and heretics. She has dared to impose slavish tasks upon thee, born in freedom. Her father's sword has been imbrued to the hilt with Anglo-Saxon blood — perhaps that of Waltheoff and Engelred has added depth to the stain! She has been, besides, a presumptuous fool, usurping for herself the trophies and warlike character which belong to the other sex. Lastly, it will be hard to find a champion to fight in her stead, since all the crusaders have passed over to Asia, which is the land, they say, in which they have come to war; and by orders of the Emperor, no means of return to the hither shore will be permitted to any of them."

"Alas! alas!" said Bertha, "how does this world change us! The son of Waltheoff I once knew brave, ready to assist distress, bold and generous. Such was what I pictured him to myself during his absence. I have met him again, and he is calculating, cold, and selfish!"

"Hush, damsel," said the Varangian, "and know him of whom thou speakest, ere thou judgest him. The Countess of Paris is such as I have said; yet let her appear boldly in the lists, and when the trumpet shall sound thrice, another shall reply, which shall

announce the arrival of her own noble lord to do battle in her stead; or should he fail to appear—I will requite her kindness to thee, Bertha, and be ready in his place."

"Wilt thou? wilt thou indeed?" said the damsel; "that was spoken like the son of Waltheoff—like the genuine stock! I will home, and comfort my mistress; for surely if the judgment of God ever directed the issue of a judicial combat, its influence will descend upon this. But you hint that the Count is here—that he is at liberty—she will enquire about that."

"She must be satisfied," replied Hereward, "to know that her husband is under the guidance of a friend, who will endeavour to protect him from his own extravagances and follies; or, at all events, of one who, if he cannot properly be called a friend, has certainly not acted, and will not act, towards him the part of an enemy.—And now, farewell, long lost—long loved!"——Before he could say more, the Saxon maiden, after two or three vain attempts to express her gratitude, threw herself into her lover's arms, and despite the coyness which she had recently shewn, impressed upon his lips the thanks which she could not speak.

They parted, Bertha returning to her mistress at the lodge, which she had left both with trouble and danger, and Hereward by the portal kept by the negro-portress, who, complimenting the handsome Varangian on his success among the fair, intimated, that she had been in some sort a witness of his meeting with the Saxon damsel. A piece of gold, part of a late largesse, amply served to bribe her tongue;

and the soldier, clear of the gardens of the philosopher, sped back as he might to the barrack—judging that it was full time to carry some supply to Count Robert, who had been left without food the whole day.

It is a common popular saying, that as the sensation of hunger is not connected with any pleasing or gentle emotion, so it is particularly remarkable for irritating those of anger and spleen. It is not, therefore, very surprising that Count Robert, who had been so unusually long without sustenance, should receive Hereward with a degree of impatience beyond what the occasion merited, and injurious certainly to the honest Varangian, who had repeatedly exposed his life that day for the interest of the Countess and the Count himself.

"Soh, sir!" he said, in that accent of affected restraint by which a superior modifies his displeasure against his inferior into a cold and scornful expression—"You have played a liberal host to us!—Not that it is of consequence; but methinks a Count of the most Christian kingdom dines not every day with a mercenary soldier, and might expect, if not the ostentatious, at least the needful part of hospitality."

"And methinks," replied the Varangian, "O most Christian Count, that such of your high rank as, by choice of fate, become the guests of such as I, may think themselves pleased, and blame not their host's niggardliness, but the difficulty of his circumstances, if dinner should not present itself oftener than once in four-and-twenty hours." So saying, he clapt his

hands together, and his domestic Edric entered. His guest looked astonished at the entrance of this third party into their retirement. "I will answer for this man," said Hereward, and addressed him in the following words: "What food hast thou, Edric, to place before the honourable Count?"

"Nothing but the cold pasty," replied the attendant, "marvellously damaged by your honour's encounter at breakfast."

The military domestic, as intimated, brought forward a large pasty, but which had already that morning sustained a furious attack, insomuch, that Count Robert of Paris, who, like all noble Normans, was somewhat nice and delicate in his eating, was in some doubt whether his scrupulousness should not prevail over his hunger; but on looking more closely, sight, smell, and a fast of twenty hours, joined to convince him that the pasty was an excellent one, and that the charger on which it was presented possessed corners yet untouched. At length, having suppressed his scruples, and made bold inroad upon the remains of the dish, he paused to partake of a flask of strong red wine which stood invitingly beside him, and a lusty draught increased the good humour which had begun to take place towards Hereward, in exchange for the displeasure with which he had received him.

"Now, by Heaven!" he said, "I myself ought to be ashamed to lack the courtesy which I recommend to others! Here have I, with the manners of a Flemish boor, been devouring the provisions of my gallant host, without even asking him to sit

down at his own table, and to partake of his own good cheer!"

"I will not strain courtesies with you for that," said Hereward; and thrusting his hand into the pasty, he proceeded with great speed and dexterity to devour the miscellaneous contents, a handful of which was enclosed in his grasp. The Count now withdrew from the table, partly in disgust at the rustic proceedings of Hereward, who, however, by now calling Edric to join him in his attack upon the pasty, shewed that he had, in fact, according to his manners, subjected himself previously to some observance of respect towards his guest; while the assistance of his attendant enabled him to make a clear cacaabulum of what was left. Count Robert at length summoned up courage sufficient to put a question, which had been trembling upon his lips ever since Hereward had returned.

"Have thine inquiries, my gallant friend, learned more concerning my unfortunate wife, my faithful Brenhilda?"

"Tidings I have," said the Anglo-Saxon, "but whether pleasing or not, yourself must be the judge. This much I have learned;—she hath, as you know, come under an engagement to meet the Cæsar in arms in the lists, but under conditions which you may perhaps think strange; these, however, she hath entertained without scruple."

"Let me know these terms," said the Count of Paris; "they will, I think, appear less strange in my eyes than in thine."

But while he affected to speak with the utmost

coolness, the husband's sparkling eye and crimsoned cheek betrayed the alteration which had taken place in his feelings. "The lady and the Cæsar," said Hereward, "as you partly heard yourself, are to meet in fight; if the Countess wins, of course she remains the wife of the noble Count of Paris; if she loses, she becomes the paramour of the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius."

"Saints and angels forbid!" said Count Robert; "were they to permit such treason to triumph, we might be pardoned for doubting their divinity!"

"Yet methinks," said the Anglo-Saxon, "it were no disgraceful precaution that both you and I, with other friends, if we can obtain such, should be seen under shield in the lists on the morning of the conflict. To triumph, or to be defeated, is in the hand of fate; but what we cannot fail to witness is, whether or not the lady receives that fair play which is the due of an honourable combatant, and which as you have yourself seen, can be sometimes basely transgressed in this Grecian empire."

"On that condition," said the Count, "and protesting, that not even the extreme danger of my lady shall make me break through the rule of a fair fight, I will surely attend the lists, if thou, brave Saxon, canst find me any means of doing so.—Yet stay," he continued, after reflecting for a moment, "thou shalt promise not to let her know that her Count is on the field, far less to point him out to her eye among the press of warriors. O, thou dost not know that the sight of the beloved will sometimes steal from us our courage, even when it has most to achieve!"

"We will endeavour," said the Varangian, "to arrange matters according to thy pleasure, so that thou findest out no more fantastical difficulties; for, by my word, an affair so complicated in itself, requires not to be confused by the fine-spun whims of thy national gallantry. Meantime, much must be done this night; and while I go about it, thou, Sir Knight, hadst best remain here, with such disguise of garments, and such food, as Edric may be able to procure for thee. Fear nothing from intrusion on the part of thy neighbours. We Varangians respect each other's secrets, of whatever nature they may chance to be."

SEAL OF RAYMOND OF TOULOUSE.

RESIDENCE OF GREEK PRIESTS: CONSTANTINOPLE.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

But for our trusty brother-in-law—and the Abbot,
With all the rest of that consorted crew,—
Destruction straight shall dog them at the heels:—
Good uncle, help to order several powers
To Oxford, or where'er these traitors are:
They shall not live within this world, I swear.

RICHARD II.

As Hereward spoke the last words narrated in the foregoing chapter, he left the Count in his apartment, and proceeded to the Blacquernal Palace. We traced his first entrance into the court, but since then he had frequently been summoned, not only by order of the Princess Anna Comnena, who delighted

in asking him questions concerning the customs of his native country and marking down the replies in her own inflated language; but also by the direct command of the Emperor himself, who had the humour of many princes, that of desiring to obtain direct information from persons in a very inferior station in their Court. The ring which the Princess had given to the Varangian, served as a pass-token more than once, and was now so generally known by the slaves of the palace, that Hereward had only to slip it into the hand of a principal person among them, and was introduced into a small chamber, not distant from the saloon already mentioned, dedicated to the Muses. In this small apartment, the Emperor, his spouse Irene, and their accomplished daughter Anna Comnena, were seated together, clad in very ordinary apparel, as indeed the furniture of the room itself was of the kind used by respectable citizens, saving that mattresses, composed of eiderdown, hung before each door to prevent the risk of eavesdropping.

"Our trusty Varangian," said the Empress.

"My guide and tutor respecting the manners of those steel-clad men," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "of whom it is so necessary that I should form an accurate idea."

"Your Imperial Majesty," said the Empress, "will not, I trust, think your consort and your muse-inspired daughter, are too many to share with you the intelligence brought by this brave and loyal man?"

"Dearest wife and daughter," returned the Emperor, "I have hitherto spared you the burden of a

painful secret, which I have locked in my own bosom, at whatever expense of solitary sorrow and unimparted anxiety. Noble daughter, you in particular will feel this calamity, learning, as you must learn, to think odiously of one, of whom it has hitherto been your duty to hold a very different opinion."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the Princess.

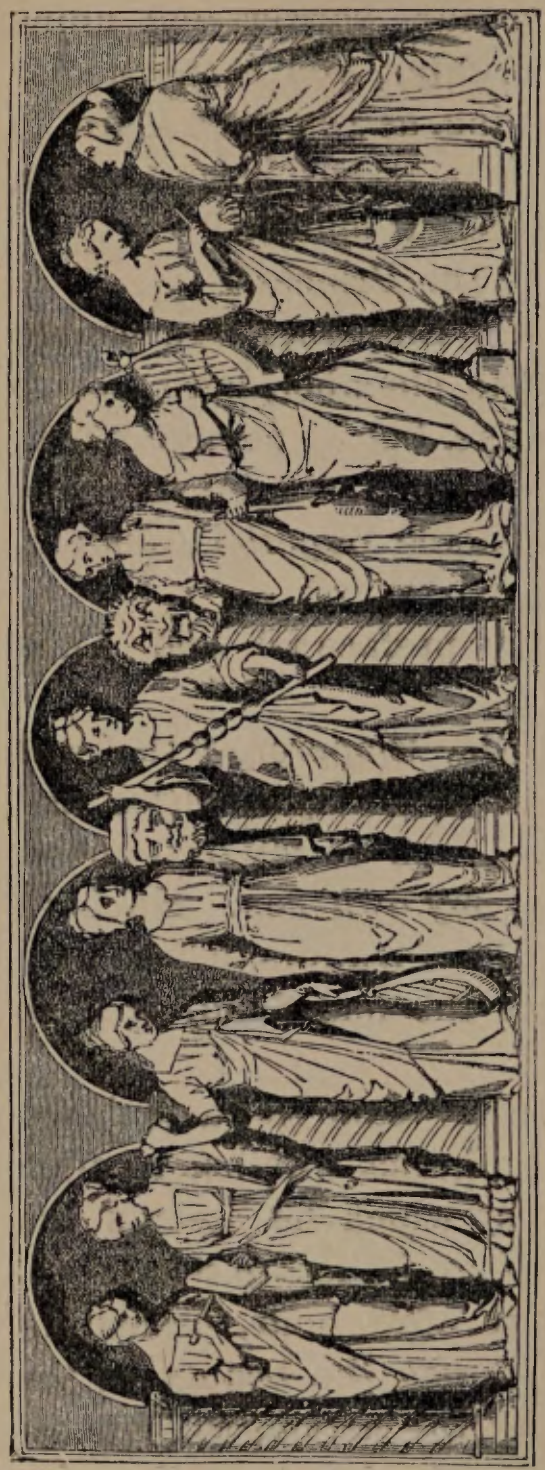
"Rally yourself," said the Emperor; "remember you are a child of the purple chamber, born, not to weep for your father's wrongs, but to avenge them, —not to regard even him who has lain by your side as half so important as the sacred Imperial grandeur, of which you are yourself a partaker."

"What can such words preface?" said Anna Comnena, in great agitation.

"They say," answered the Emperor, "that the Cæsar is an ungrateful man to all my bounties, and even to that which annexed him to my own house, and made him by adoption my own son. He hath consorted himself with a knot of traitors, whose very names are enough to raise the foul fiend, as if to snatch his assured prey!"

"Could Nicephorus do this?" said the astonished and forlorn Princess; "Nicephorus, who has so often called my eyes the lights by which he steered his path? Could he do this to my father, to whose exploits he has listened hour after hour, protesting that he knew not whether it was the beauty of the language, or the heroism of the action, which most enchanted him? Thinking with the same thought, seeing with the same eye, loving with the same heart,—O, my father! it is impossible that he could

be so false. Think of the neighbouring Temple of the Muses!"



SCULPTURE OF THE MUSES IN THE TOWNLEY COLLECTION.

"And if I did," murmured Alexius in his heart, "I should think of the only apology which could be proposed for the traitor. A little is well enough, but the full soul loatheth the honeycomb." Then speaking aloud, "My daughter," he said, "be comforted; we ourselves were unwilling to believe the shameful truth; but our guards have been debauched; their commander, that ungrateful Achilles Tatius, with the equal traitor, Agelastes, have been seduced to favour our imprisonment or murder; and, alas for Greece! in the very moment when she required the fostering care of a parent, she was to be deprived of him by a sudden and merciless blow!"

Here the Emperor wept, whether for the loss to

be sustained by his subjects, or of his own life, it is hard to say.

"Methinks," said Irene, "your Imperial Highness is slow in taking measures against the danger."

"Under your gracious permission, mother," answered the Princess, "I would rather say he was hasty in giving belief to it. Methinks the evidence of a Varangian, granting him to be ever so stout a man-at-arms, is but a frail guarantee against the honour of your son-in-law—the approved bravery and fidelity of the captain of your guards—the deep sense, virtue, and profound wisdom of the greatest of your philosophers——"

"And the conceit of an over-educated daughter," said the Emperor, "who will not allow her parent to judge in what most concerns him. I will tell thee, Anna, I know every one of them, and the trust which may be reposed in them; the honour of your Nicephorus—the bravery and fidelity of the Acolyte—and the virtue and wisdom of Agelastes—have I not had them all in my purse? And had my purse continued well filled, and my arm strong as it was of late, there they would have still remained. But the butterflies went off as the weather became cold, and I must meet the tempest without their assistance. You talk of want of proof? I have proof sufficient when I see danger; this honest soldier brought me indications which corresponded with my own private remarks, made on purpose. Varangian he shall be of Varangians; Acolyte he shall be named, in place of the present traitor; and who knows what may come thereafter?"

"May it please your Highness," said the Varangian, who had been hitherto silent, "many men in this empire rise to dignity by the fall of their original patrons, but it is a road to greatness to which I cannot reconcile my conscience; moreover, having recovered a friend, from whom I was long ago separated, I shall require, in short space, your Imperial license for going hence, where I shall leave thousands of enemies behind me, and spending my life, like many of my countrymen, under the banner of King William of Scotland——"

"Part with *thee*, most inimitable man!" cried the Emperor, with emphasis; "where shall I get a soldier—a champion—a friend—so faithful?"

"Noble sir," replied the Anglo-Saxon, "I am every way sensible to your goodness and munificence; but let me entreat you to call me by my own name, and to promise me nothing but your forgiveness, for my having been the agent of such confusion among your Imperial servants. Not only is the threatened fate of Achilles Tatius, my benefactor; of the Cæsar, whom I think my well-wisher; and even of Agelastes himself, painful, so far as it is of my bringing round; but also I have known it somehow happen, that those on whom your Imperial Majesty has lavished the most valuable expressions of your favour one day, were the next day food to fatten the chough and crow. And this, I acknowledge, is a purpose, for which I would not willingly have it said I had brought my English limbs to these Grecian shores."

"Call thee by thine own name, my Edward," said

the Emperor, (while he muttered aside — " by Heaven, I have again forgot the name of the barbarian!")—" by thine own name certainly for the present, but only until we shall devise one more fitted for the trust we repose in thee. Meantime, look at this scroll, which contains, I think, all the particulars which we have been able to learn of this plot, and give it to these unbelieving women, who will not credit that an Emperor is in danger, till the blades of the conspirators' poniards are clashing within his ribs."

Hereward did as he was commanded, and having looked at the scroll, and signified, by bending his head, his acquiescence in its contents, he presented it to Irene, who had not read long, ere, with a countenance so embittered that she had difficulty in pointing out the cause of her displeasure to her daughter, she bade her, with animation, " Read that—read that, and judge of the gratitude and affection of thy Cæsar!"

The Princess Anna Comnena awoke from a state of profound and overpowering melancholy, and looked at the passage pointed out to her, at first with an air of languid curiosity, which presently deepened into the most intense interest. She clutched the scroll as a falcon does his prey, her eye lightened with indignation; and it was with the cry of the bird when in fury that she exclaimed, " Bloody - minded, double - hearted traitor! what wouldst thou have? Yes, father," she said, rising in fury, " it is no longer the voice of a deceived princess that shall intercede to avert from the traitor

Nicephorus the doom he has deserved! Did he think that one born in the purple chamber could be divorced—murdered, perhaps—with the petty formula of the Romans, 'Restore the keys—be no longer my domestic drudge?'* Was a daughter of the blood of Comnenus liable to such insults as the meanest of Quirites might bestow on a family housekeeper!"

So saying, she dashed the tears from her eyes, and her countenance, naturally that of beauty and gentleness, became animated with the expression of a fury. Hereward looked at her with a mixture of fear, dislike, and compassion. She again burst forth, for nature having given her considerable abilities, had lent her at the same time an energy of passion, far superior in power to the cold ambition of Irene, or the wily, ambi-dexter, shuffling policy of the Emperor.

"He shall abye it," said the Princess; "he shall dearly abye it! False, smiling, cozening traitor!—and for that unfeminine barbarian! Something of this I guessed, even at that old fool's banquetting-house; and yet if this unworthy Cæsar submits his body to the chance of arms, he is less prudent than I have some reason to believe. Think you he will have the madness to brand us with such open neglect, my father? and will you not invent some mode of ensuring our revenge?"

"Soh!" thought the Emperor, "this difficulty is over; she will run down hill to her revenge, and will need the snaffle and curb more than the lash. If

* The laconic form of the Roman divorce.

every jealous dame in Constantinople were to pursue her fury as unrelentingly, our laws should be written, like Draco's, not in ink, but in blood.—Attend to me now," he said aloud, "my wife, my daughter, and thou, dear Edward, and you shall learn, and you three only, my mode of navigating the vessel of the state, through these shoals."

"Let us see distinctly," continued Alexius, "the means by which they propose to act, and these shall instruct us how to meet them. A certain number of the Varangians are unhappily seduced, under pretence of wrongs, artfully stirred up by their villanous general. A part of them are studiously to be arranged nigh our person—the traitor Ursel, some of them suppose, is dead, but if it were so, his name is sufficient to draw together his old factionaries—I have a means of satisfying them on that point, on which I shall remain silent for the present.—A considerable body of the Immortal Guards have also given way to seduction; they are to be placed to support the handful of treacherous Varangians, who are in the plot to attack our person.—Now, a slight change in the stations of the soldiery, which thou, my faithful Edward—or—a—a—whatever thou art named,—for which thou, I say, shalt have full authority, will derange the plans of the traitors, and place the true men in such position around them as to cut them to pieces with little trouble."

"And the combat, my lord?" said the Saxon.

"Thou hadst been no true Varangian hadst thou not enquired after that," said the Emperor, nodding good-humouredly towards him. "As to the combat,

the Cæsar has devised it, and it shall be my care that he shall not retreat from the dangerous part of it. He cannot in honour avoid fighting with this woman, strange as the combat is; and however it ends, the conspiracy will break forth, and as assuredly as it comes against persons prepared, and in arms, shall it be stifled in the blood of the conspirators!"

"My revenge does not require this," said the Princess; "and your Imperial honour is also interested that this Countess shall be protected."

"It is little business of mine," said the Emperor. "She comes here with her husband altogether uninvited. He behaves with insolence in my presence, and deserves whatever may be the issue to himself or his lady of their mad adventure. In sooth, I desired little more than to give him a fright with those animals whom their ignorance judged enchanted, and to give his wife a slight alarm about the impetuosity of a Grecian lover, and there my vengeance should have ended. But it may be that his wife may be taken under my protection, now that little revenge is over."

"And a paltry revenge it was," said the Empress, "that you, a man past middle life, and with a wife who might command some attention, should constitute yourself the object of alarm to such a handsome man as Count Robert, and the Amazon his wife."

"By your favour, dame Irene, no," said the Emperor. "I left that part of the proposed comedy to my son-in-law, the Cæsar."

But when the poor Emperor had in some measure stopt one floodgate, he effectually opened another,

and one which was more formidable. "The more shame to your Imperial wisdom, my father!" exclaimed the Princess Anna Comnena; "it is a shame that with wisdom and a beard like yours, you should be meddling in such indecent follies as admit disturbance into private families, and that family your own daughter's! Who can say that the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius ever looked astray towards another woman than his wife, till the Emperor taught him to do so, and involved him in a web of intrigue and treachery, in which he has endangered the life of his father-in-law?"

"Daughter! daughter! daughter!"—said the Empress; "daughter of a she-wolf, I think, to goad her parent, at such an unhappy time, when all the leisure he has is too little to defend his life!"

"Peace, I pray you, women both, with your senseless clamours," answered Alexius, "and let me at least swim for my life undisturbed with your folly. God knows if I am a man to encourage, I will not say the reality of wrong, but even its mere appearance!"

These words he uttered, crossing himself, with a devout groan. His wife Irene, in the meantime, stept before him, and said, with a bitterness in her looks and accent, which only long-concealed nuptial hatred breaking forth at once could convey,—"Alexius, terminate this affair how it will, you have lived a hypocrite, and thou wilt not fail to die one." So saying, with an air of noble indignation, and carrying her daughter along with her, she swept out of the apartment.

The Emperor looked after her in some confusion. He soon, however, recovered his self-possession, and turning to Hereward, with a look of injured majesty, said, "Ah! my dear Edward,"—for the word had become rooted in his mind, instead of the less euphonic name of Hereward,—"thou seest how it is even with the greatest, and that the Emperor, in moments of difficulty, is a subject of misconstruction, as well as the meanest burgess of Constantinople; nevertheless, my trust is so great in thee, Edward, that I would have thee believe, that my daughter, Anna Comnena, is not of the temper of her mother, but rather of my own; honouring, thou mayst see, with religious fidelity, the unworthy ties which I hope soon to break, and assort her with other fetters of Cupid, which shall be borne more lightly. Edward, my main trust is in thee. Accident presents us with an opportunity, happy of the happiest so it be rightly improved, of having all the traitors before us assembled on one fair field. Think, *then*, on that day, as the Franks say at their tournaments, that fair eyes behold thee. Thou canst not devise a gift within my power, but I will gladly load thee with it."

"It needs not," said the Varangian, somewhat coldly; "my highest ambition is to merit the epitaph upon my tomb, 'Hereward was faithful.' I am about, however, to demand a proof of your Imperial confidence, which, perhaps, you may think a startling one."

"Indeed!" said the Emperor. "What, in one word, is thy demand?"

"Permission," replied Hereward, "to go to the

Duke of Bouillon's encampment, and entreat his presence in the lists, to witness this extraordinary combat."

"That he may return with his crusading madmen," said the Emperor, "and sack Constantinople, under pretence of doing justice to his confederates? This, Varangian, is at least speaking thy mind openly."

"No, by Heavens!" said Hereward suddenly; "the Duke of Bouillon shall come with no more knights than may be a reasonable guard, should treachery be offered to the Countess of Paris."

"Well, even in this," said the Emperor, "will I be conformable; and if thou, Edward, betrayest my trust, think that thou forfeitest all that my friendship has promised, and dost incur, besides, the damnation that is due to the traitor who betrays with a kiss."

"For thy reward, noble sir," answered the Varangian, "I hereby renounce all claim to it. When the diadem is once more firmly fixed upon thy brow, and the sceptre in thy hand, if I am then alive, if my poor services should deserve so much, I will petition thee for the means of leaving this court, and returning to the distant island in which I was born. Meanwhile, think me not unfaithful, because I have for a time the means of being so with effect. Your Imperial Highness shall learn that Hereward is as true as is your right hand to your left."—So saying, he took his leave with a profound obeisance.

The Emperor gazed after him with a countenance in which doubt was mingled with admiration.

"I have trusted him," he said, "with all he asked, and with the power of ruining me entirely, if such be his purpose. He has but to breathe a whisper, and the whole mad crew of crusaders, kept in humour at the expense of so much current falsehood, and so much more gold, will return with fire and sword to burn down Constantinople, and sow with salt the place where it stood. I have done what I had resolved never to do,—I have ventured kingdom and life on the faith of a man born of woman. How often have I said, nay sworn, that I would not hazard myself on such peril, and yet, step by step, I have done so! I cannot tell—there is in that man's looks and words a good faith which overwhelms me; and, what is almost incredible, my belief in him has increased in proportion to his shewing me how slight my power was over him. I threw, like the wily angler, every bait I could devise, and some of them such as a king would scarcely have disdained; to none of these would he rise; but yet he gorges, I may say, the bare hook, and enters upon my service without a shadow of self-interest.—Can this be double distilled treachery?—or can it be what men call disinterestedness?—If I thought him false, the moment is not yet past—he has not yet crossed the bridge—he has not passed the guards of the palace, who have no hesitation, and know no disobedience—But no—I were then alone in the land, and without a friend or confidant.—I hear the sound of the outer gate unclose, the sense of danger certainly renders my ears more acute than usual. It shuts again—the die is cast. He is at liberty—and Alexius Comnenus must stand

or fall, according to the uncertain faith of a mercenary Varangian." He clapt his hands; a slave appeared, of whom he demanded wine. He drank, and his heart was cheered within him. "I am decided," he said, "and will abide with resolution the cast of the throw, for good or for evil."

So saying, he retired to his apartment, and was not again seen during that night.

EMBLEMS OF GODDESS CYBYL.

CRUSADERS; FROM GLASS PAINTING.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND.

And aye, as if for death, some lonely trumpet peal'd.
CAMPBELL.

THE Varangian, his head agitated with the weighty matters which were imposed on him, stopt from time to time as he journeyed through the moonlight streets, to arrest passing ideas as they shot through his mind, and consider them with accuracy in all their bearings. His thoughts were such as animated or alarmed him alternately, each followed by a confused throng of accompaniments which it suggested, and banished again in its turn by reflections of an-

other description. It was one of those conjunctures when the minds of ordinary men feel themselves unable to support a burden which is suddenly flung upon them, and when, on the contrary, those of uncommon fortitude, and that best of Heaven's gifts, good sense, founded on presence of mind, feel their talents awakened and regulated for the occasion, like a good steed under the management of a rider of courage and experience.

As he stood in one of those fits of reverie, which repeatedly during that night arrested his stern military march, Hereward thought that his ear caught the note of a distant trumpet. This surprised him; a trumpet blown at that late hour, and in the streets of Constantinople, argued something extraordinary; for as all military movements were the subject of special ordinance, the etiquette of the night could hardly have been transgressed without some great cause. The question was, what that cause could be?

Had the insurrection broken out unexpectedly, and in a different manner from what the conspirators proposed to themselves?—If so, his meeting with his plighted bride, after so many years' absence, was but a delusive preface to their separating for ever. Or had the crusaders, a race of men upon whose motions it was difficult to calculate, suddenly taken arms and returned from the opposite shore to surprise the city? This might very possibly be the case: so numerous had been the different causes of complaint afforded to the crusaders, that, when they were now for the first time assem-

bled into one body, and had heard the stories which they could reciprocally tell concerning the perfidy of the Greeks, nothing was so likely, so natural, even perhaps so justifiable, as that they should study revenge.

But the sound rather resembled a point of war regularly blown, than the tumultuous blare of bugle-horns and trumpets, the accompaniments at once, and the annunciation, of a taken town, in which the horrid circumstances of storm had not yet given place to such stern peace as the victor's weariness of slaughter and rapine allows at length to the wretched inhabitants. Whatever it was, it was necessary that Hereward should learn its purport, and therefore he made his way into a broad street near the barracks, from which the sound seemed to come, to which point, indeed, his way was directed for other reasons.

The inhabitants of that quarter of the town did not appear violently startled by this military signal. The moonlight slept on the street, crossed by the gigantic shadowy towers of Sancta Sophia. No human being appeared in the streets, and such as for an instant looked from their doors or from their lattices, seemed to have their curiosity quickly satisfied, for they withdrew their heads, and secured the opening through which they had peeped.

Hereward could not help remembering the traditions which were recounted by the fathers of his tribe, in the deep woods of Hampshire, and which spoke of invisible huntsmen, who were heard to follow with viewless horses and hounds the unseen

chase through the depths of the forests of Germany. Such it seemed were the sounds with which these haunted woods were wont to ring while the wild chase was up; and with such apparent terror did the hearers listen to their clamour.

"Fie!" he said, as he suppressed within him a tendency to the same superstitious fears; "do such childish fancies belong to a man trusted with so much, and from whom so much is expected?" He paced down the street, therefore, with his battle-axe over his shoulder, and the first person whom he saw venturing to look out of his door, he questioned concerning the cause of this military music at such an unaccustomed hour.

"I cannot tell, so please you, my lord," said the citizen, unwilling, it appeared, to remain in the open air, or to enter into conversation, and greatly disposed to decline further questioning. This was the political citizen of Constantinople, whom we met with at the beginning of this history, and who, hastily stepping into his habitation, eschewed all further conversation.

The wrestler Stephanos shewed himself at the next door, which was garlanded with oak and ivy leaves, in honour of some recent victory. He stood unshrinking, partly encouraged by the consciousness of personal strength, and partly by a rugged surliness of temper, which is often mistaken among persons of this kind for real courage. His admirer and flatterer, Lysimachus, kept himself ensconced behind his ample shoulders.

As Hereward passed, he put the same question as

INTERIOR OF MOSQUE OF SANTA SOPHIA: CONSTANTINOPLE.

he did to the former citizen,—"Know you the meaning of these trumpets sounding so late?"

"You should know best yourself," answered Stephanos, doggedly; "for, to judge by your axe and helmet, they are your trumpets, and not ours, which disturb honest men in their first sleep."

"Varlet!" answered the Varangian, with an emphasis which made the prizer start,—"but—when that trumpet sounds, it is no time for a soldier to punish insolence as it deserves."

The Greek started back and bolted into his house, nearly overthrowing in the speed of his retreat, the artist Lysimachus, who was listening to what passed.

Hereward passed on to the barracks, where the military music had seemed to halt; but on the Varangian crossing the threshold of the ample court-yard, it broke forth again with a tremendous burst, whose clangour almost stunned him, though well accustomed to the sounds. "What is the meaning of this, Engelbrecht?" he said to the Varangian sentinel, who paced axe in hand before the entrance.

"The proclamation of a challenge and combat," answered Engelbrecht. "Strange things toward, comrade; the frantic crusaders have bit the Grecians, and infected them with their humour of tilting, as they say dogs do each other with madness."

Hereward made no reply to the sentinel's speech, but pressed forward into a knot of his fellow-soldiers who were assembled in the court, half-armed, or, more properly, in total disarray, as just arisen from their beds, and huddled around the trumpets of their

corps, which were drawn out in full pomp. He of the gigantic instrument, whose duty it was to intimate the express commands of the Emperor, was not wanting in his place, and the musicians were supported by a band of the Varangians in arms, headed by Achilles Tatius himself. Hereward could also notice, on approaching nearer, as his comrades made way for him, that six of the Imperial heralds were on duty on this occasion; four of these (two acting at the same time) had already made proclamation, which was to be repeated for the third time by the two last, as was the usual fashion in Constantinople with Imperial mandates of great consequence. Achilles Tatius, the moment he saw his confidant, made him a sign, which Hereward understood as conveying a desire to speak with him after the proclamation was over. The herald, after the flourish of trumpets was finished, commenced in these words:—

"By the authority of the resplendent and divine Prince Alexius Comnenus, Emperor of the most holy Roman Empire, his Imperial Majesty desires it to be made known to all and sundry the subjects of his empire, whatever their race of blood may be, or at whatever shrine of divinity they happen to bend—Know ye, therefore, that upon the second day after this is dated, our beloved son-in-law, the much esteemed Cæsar, hath taken upon him to do battle with our sworn enemy, Robert, Count of Paris, on account of his insolent conduct, by presuming publicly to occupy our royal seat, and no less by breaking, in our Imperial presence, those curious speci-

mens of art, ornamenting our throne, called by tradition the Lions of Solomon. And that there may not remain a man in Europe who shall dare to say that the Grecians are behind other parts of the world in any of the manly exercises which Christian nations use, the said noble enemies, renouncing all assistance from falsehood, from spells, or from magic, shall debate this quarrel in three courses with grinded spears, and three passages of arms with sharpened swords; the field to be at the judgment of the honourable Emperor, and to be decided at his most gracious and unerring pleasure. And so God shew the right!"

Another formidable flourish of the trumpets concluded the ceremony. Achilles then dismissed the attendant troops, as well as the heralds and musicians, to their respective quarters; and having got Hereward close to his side, inquired of him whether he had learned any thing of the prisoner, Robert, Count of Paris.

"Nothing," said the Varangian, "save the tidings your proclamation contains."

"You think, then," said Achilles, "that the Count has been a party to it?"

"He ought to have been so," answered the Varangian. "I know no one but himself entitled to take burden for his appearance in the lists."

"Why, look you," said the Acolyte, "my most excellent, though blunt-witted Hereward, this Cæsar of ours hath had the extravagance to venture his tender wit in comparison to that of Achilles Tatius. He stands upon his honour, too, this ineffable fool, and is

displeased with the idea of being supposed either to challenge a woman, or to receive a challenge at her hand. He has substituted, therefore, the name of the lord instead of the lady. If the Count fail to appear, the Cæsar walks forward challenger and successful combatant at a cheap rate, since no one has encountered him, and claims that the lady should be delivered up to him as captive of his dreaded bow and spear. This will be the signal for a general tumult, in which, if the Emperor be not slain on the spot, he will be conveyed to the dungeon of his own Blacquernal, there to endure the doom which his cruelty has inflicted upon so many others."

"But—" said the Varangian.

"But—but—but," said the officer; "but thou art a fool. Canst thou not see that this gallant Cæsar is willing to avoid the risk of encountering with this lady, while he earnestly desires to be supposed willing to meet her husband? It is our business to fix the combat in such a shape as to bring all who are prepared for insurrection together in arms to play their parts. Do thou only see that our trusty friends are placed near to the Emperor's person, and in such a manner as to keep from him the officious and meddling portion of guards, who may be disposed to assist him; and whether the Cæsar fights a combat with lord or lady, or whether there be any combat at all or not, the revolution shall be accomplished, and the Tatii shall replace the Comneni upon the Imperial throne of Constantinople. Go, my trusty Hereward. Thou wilt not forget that the signal word of the insurrection is Ursel, who lives in the

affections of the people, although his body, it is said, has long lain a corpse in the dungeons of the Blacquernal."

"What was this Ursel," said Hereward, "of whom I hear men talk so variously?"

"A competitor for the crown with Alexius Comnenus—good, brave, and honest; but overpowered by the cunning, rather than the skill or bravery of his foe. He died, as I believe, in the Blacquernal; though when, or how, there are few that can say. But, up and be doing, my Hereward! Speak encouragement to the Varangians—Interest whomsoever thou canst to join us. Of the Immortals, as they are called, and of the discontented citizens, enough are prepared to fill up the cry, and follow in the wake of those on whom we must rely as the beginners of the enterprise. No longer shall Alexius's cunning, in avoiding popular assemblies, avail to protect him; he cannot, with regard to his honour, avoid being present at a combat to be fought beneath his own eye; and Mercury be praised for the eloquence which inspired him, after some hesitation, to determine for the proclamation!"

"You have seen him, then, this evening?" said the Varangian.

"Seen him! Unquestionably!" answered the Acolyte. "Had I ordered these trumpets to be sounded without his knowledge, the blast had blown the head from my shoulders."

"I had well-nigh met you at the palace," said Hereward; while his heart throbbed almost as high as if he had actually had such a dangerous encounter.

"I heard something of it," said Achilles; "that you came to take the parting orders of him who now acts the sovereign. Surely, had I seen you there, with that steadfast, open, seemingly honest countenance, cheating the wily Greek by very dint of bluntness, I had not forborne laughing at the contrast between that and the thoughts of thy heart."

"God alone," said Hereward, "knows the thoughts of our hearts; but I take him to witness, that I am faithful to my promise, and will discharge the task intrusted to me."

"Bravo! mine honest Anglo-Saxon," said Achilles. "I pray thee to call my slaves to unarm me; and when thou thyself doffest those weapons of an ordinary life-guard's-man, tell them they never shall above twice more enclose the limbs of one for whom fate has much more fitting garments in store."

Hereward dared not intrust his voice with an answer to so critical a speech; he bowed profoundly, and retired to his own quarters in the building.

Upon entering the apartment, he was immediately saluted by the voice of Count Robert, in joyful accents, not suppressed by the fear of making himself heard, though prudence should have made that uppermost in his mind.

"Hast thou heard it, my dear Hereward," he said —"hast thou heard the proclamation, by which this Greek antelope hath defied me to tilting with grinded spears, and fighting three passages of arms with sharpened swords? Yet there is something strange, too, that he should not think it safer to hold my lady to the encounter! He may think, perhaps,

that the crusaders would not permit such a battle to be fought. But, by Our Lady of the Broken Lances! he little knows that the men of the west hold their ladies' character for courage as jealously as they do their own. This whole night have I been considering in what armour I shall clothe me; what shift I shall make for a steed; and whether I shall not honour him sufficiently by using Tranchefer, as my only weapon, against his whole armour, offensive and defensive."

"I shall take care, however," said Hereward, "that thou art better provided in case of need.—Thou knowest not the Greeks."

HANDLE OF CHARLEMAGNE'S SWORD.

ENTRANCE TO THE BLACK SEA.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD.

THE Varangian did not leave the Count of Paris until the latter had placed in his hands his signet-ring, *semee,* (as the heralds express it,) *with lances splintered*, and bearing the proud motto, "Mine yet unscathed." Provided with this symbol of confidence, it was now his business to take order for communicating the approaching solemnity to the leader of the crusading army, and demanding from him, in the name of Robert of Paris, and the Lady Brenhilda, such a detachment of western cavaliers as might ensure strict observance of honour and honesty in the arrangement of the lists, and during the progress of the combat. The duties imposed on Hereward were such as to render it impossible for him to proceed personally to the camp of Godfrey; and though

there were many of the Varangians in whose fidelity he could have trusted, he knew of none among those under his immediate command whose intelligence, on so novel an occasion, might be entirely depended on. In this perplexity, he strolled, perhaps, without well knowing why, to the gardens of Agelastes, where fortune once more produced him an interview with Bertha.

No sooner had Hereward made her aware of his difficulty, than the faithful bower-maiden's resolution was taken.

"I see," said she, "that the peril of this part of the adventure must rest with me; and wherefore should it not? My mistress, in the bosom of prosperity, offered herself to go forth into the wide world for my sake; I will for hers go to the camp of this Frankish lord. He is an honourable man, and a pious Christian, and his followers are faithful pilgrims. A woman can have nothing to fear who goes to such men upon such an errand."

The Varangian, however, was too well acquainted with the manners of camps to permit the fair Bertha to go alone. He provided, therefore, for her safeguard a trusty old soldier, bound to his person by long kindness and confidence, and having thoroughly possessed her of the particulars of the message she was to deliver, and desired her to be in readiness without the enclosure at peep of dawn, returned once more to his barracks.

With the earliest light, Hereward was again at the spot where he had parted overnight with Bertha, accompanied by the honest soldier to whose care he

meant to confide her. In a short time, he had seen them safely on board of a ferry-boat lying in the harbour, the master of which readily admitted them, after some examination of their license, to pass to Scutari, which was forged in the name of the Acolyte, as authorized by that foul conspirator, and which agreed with the appearance of old Osmund and his young charge.

The morning was lovely; and ere long the town of Scutari opened on the view of the travellers, glittering, as now, with a variety of architecture, which, though it might be termed fantastical, could not be denied the praise of beauty. These buildings rose boldly out of a thick grove of cypresses, and other huge trees, the larger, probably, as they were respected for filling the cemeteries, and being the guardians of the dead.

At the period we mention, another circumstance, no less striking than beautiful, rendered doubly interesting a scene which must have been at all times greatly so. A large portion of that miscellaneous army which came to regain the holy places of Palestine, and the blessed Sepulchre itself, from the infidels, had established themselves in a camp within a mile, or thereabouts, of Scutari. Although, therefore, the crusaders were destitute in a great measure of the use of tents, the army (excepting the pavilions of some leaders of high rank) had constructed for themselves temporary huts, not unpleasing to the eye, being decorated with leaves and flowers, while the tall pennons and banners that floated over them with various devices, shewed that the flower of

Europe were assembled at that place. A loud and varied murmur, resembling that of a thronged hive, floated from the camp of the crusaders to the neighbouring town of Scutari, and every now and then the deep tone was broken by some shriller sound, the note of some musical instrument, or the treble scream of some child or female, in fear or in gaiety.

The party at length landed in safety; and as they approached one of the gates of the camp, there sallied forth a brisk array of gallant cavaliers, pages, and squires, exercising their masters' horses or their own. From the noise they made, conversing at the very top of their voices, galloping, curvetting, and prancing their palfreys, it seemed as if their early discipline had called them to exercise ere the fumes of last night's revel were thoroughly dissipated by repose. So soon as they saw Bertha and her party, they approached them with cries which marked their country was Italy—"Al'erta! al'erta!—Roba de guadagno, cameradi!"*

They gathered round the Anglo-Saxon maiden and her companions, repeating their cries in a manner which made Bertha tremble. Their general demand was, "What was her business in their camp?"

"I would to the general-in-chief, cavaliers," answered Bertha, "having a secret message to his ear."

"For whose ear?" said a leader of the party, a handsome youth of about eighteen years of age, who seemed either to have a sounder brain than

* That is—"Take heed! take heed!—there is booty, comrades!"

his fellows, or to have overflowed it with less wine. "Which of our leaders do you come hither to see?" he demanded.

"Godfrey of Bouillon."

"Indeed!" said the page who had spoken first; "can nothing of less consequence serve thy turn? Take a look amongst us; young are we all, and reasonably wealthy. My Lord of Bouillon is old, and if he has any sequins, he is not like to lavish them in this way."

"Still I have a token to Godfrey of Bouillon," answered Bertha, "an assured one; and he will little thank any who obstructs my free passage to him;" and therewithal shewing a little case, in which the signet of the Count of Paris was enclosed, "I will trust it in your hands," she said, "if you promise not to open it, but to give me free access to the noble leader of the crusaders."

"I will," said the youth, "and if such be the Duke's pleasure thou shalt be admitted to him."

"Ernest the Apulian, thy dainty Italian wit is caught in a trap," said one of his companions.

"Thou art an ultramontane fool, Polydore," returned Ernest; "there may be more in this than either thy wit or mine is able to fathom. This maiden and one of her attendants wear a dress belonging to the Varangian Imperial Guard. They have perhaps been intrusted with a message from the Emperor, and it is not irreconcilable with Alexius's politics to send it through such messengers as these. Let us, therefore, convey them in all honour to the General's tent."

"With all my heart," said Polydore. "A blue-eyed wench is a pretty thing, but I like not the sauce of the camp-marshal, nor his taste in attiring men who give way to temptation.* Yet, ere I prove a fool like my companion, I would ask who or what this pretty maiden is, who comes to put noble princes and holy pilgrims in mind that they have in their time had the follies of men?"

Bertha advanced and whispered in the ear of Ernest. Meantime joke followed jest, among Polydore and the rest of the gay youths, in riotous and ribald succession, which, however characteristic of the rude speakers, may as well be omitted here. Their effect was to shake in some degree the fortitude of the Saxon maiden, who had some difficulty in mustering courage to address them. "As you have mothers, gentlemen," she said, "as you have fair sisters, whom you would protect from dishonour with your best blood—as you love and honour those holy places which you are sworn to free from the infidel enemy, have compassion on me, that you may merit success in your undertaking!"

"Fear nothing, maiden," said Ernest, "I will be your protector; and you, my comrades, be ruled by me. I have, during your brawling, taken a view, though somewhat against my promise, of the pledge which she bears, and if she who presents it is affronted or maltreated, be assured Godfrey of Bouillon will severely avenge the wrong done her."

* Persons among the Crusaders found guilty of certain offences, did penance in a dress of tar and feathers, though it is supposed a punishment of modern invention.

"Nay, comrade, if thou canst warrant us so much," said Polydore, "I will myself be most anxious to conduct the young woman in honour and safety to Sir Godfrey's tent."

"The Princes," said Ernest, "must be nigh meeting there in council. What I have said I will warrant and uphold with hand and life. More I might guess, but I conclude this sensible young maiden can speak for herself."

"Now, Heaven bless thee, gallant squire," said Bertha, "and make thee alike brave and fortunate! Embarrass yourself no farther about me, than to deliver me safe to your leader, Godfrey."

"We spend time," said Ernest, springing from his horse. "You are no soft Eastern, fair maid, and I presume you will find yourself under no difficulty in managing a quiet horse?"

"Not the least," said Bertha, as, wrapping herself in her cassock, she sprung from the ground, and alighted upon the spirited palfrey, as a linnet stoops upon a rose bush. "And now, sir, as my business really brooks no delay, I will be indebted to you to shew me instantly to the tent of Duke Godfrey of Bouillon."

By availing herself of this courtesy of the young Apulian, Bertha imprudently separated herself from the old Varangian; but the intentions of the youth were honourable, and he conducted her through the tents and huts to the pavilion of the celebrated General-in-chief of the Crusade.

"Here," he said, "you must tarry for a space, under the guardianship of my companions," (for two or

three of the pages had accompanied them, out of curiosity to see the issue,) "and I will take the commands of the Duke of Bouillon upon the subject."

To this nothing could be objected, and Bertha had nothing better to do than to admire the outside of the tent, which, in one of Alexius's fits of generosity and munificence, had been presented by the Greek Emperor to the Chief of the Franks. It was raised upon tall spear-shaped poles, which had the semblance of gold; its curtains were of a thick stuff, manufactured of silk, cotton, and gold thread. The warders who stood round, were (at least during the time that the council was held) old grave men, the personal squires of the body, most of them, of the sovereigns who had taken the Cross, and who could, therefore, be trusted as a guard over the assembly, without danger of their blabbing what they might overhear. Their appearance was serious and considerate, and they looked like men who had taken upon them the Cross, not as an idle adventure of arms, but as a purpose of the most solemn and serious nature. One of these stopt the Italian, and demanded what business authorized him to press forward into the council of the crusaders, who were already taking their seats. The page answered by giving his name, "Ernest of Otranto, page of Prince Tancred;" and stated that he announced a young woman, who bore a token to the Duke of Bouillon, adding that it was accompanied by a message for his own ear.

Bertha, meantime, laid aside her mantle, or upper garment, and disposed the rest of her dress according to the Anglo-Saxon costume. She had hardly

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completed this task, before the page of Prince Tancred returned, to conduct her into the presence of the council of the Crusade. She followed his signal; while the other young men who had accompanied her, wondering at the apparent ease with which she gained admittance, drew back to a respectful distance from the tent, and there canvassed the singularity of their morning's adventure.

In the meanwhile, the ambassadress herself entered the council chamber, exhibiting an agreeable mixture of shamefacedness and reserve, together with a bold determination to do her duty at all events. There were about fifteen of the principal crusaders assembled in council, with their chieftain Godfrey. He himself was a tall, strong man, arrived at that period of life in which men are supposed to have lost none of their resolution, while they have acquired a wisdom and circumspection unknown to their earlier years. The countenance of Godfrey bespoke both prudence and boldness, and resembled his hair, where a few threads of silver were already mingled with his raven locks.

Tancred, the noblest knight of the Christian chivalry, sat at no great distance from him, with Hugh, Earl of Vermandois, generally called the Great Count, the selfish and wily Bohemond, the powerful Raymond of Provence, and others of the principal crusaders, all more or less completely sheathed in armour.

Bertha did not allow her courage to be broken down, but advancing with a timid grace towards Godfrey, she placed in his hands the signet which

had been restored to her by the young page, and after a deep obeisance, spoke these words: "Godfrey, Count of Bouillon, Duke of Lorraine the Lower, Chief of the Holy Enterprise called the Crusade, and you, his gallant comrades, peers, and companions, by whatever titles you may be honoured, I, an humble maiden of England, daughter of Engelred, originally a franklin of Hampshire, and since Chieftain of the Foresters, or free Anglo-Saxons, under the command of the celebrated Edric, do claim what credence is due to the bearer of the true pledge which I put into your hand, on the part of one not the least considerable of your own body, Count Robert of Paris——"

"Our most honourable confederate," said Godfrey, looking at the ring. "Most of you, my lords, must, I think, know this signet — a field sown with the fragments of many splintered lances."—The signet was handed from one of the assembly to another, and generally recognised.

When Godfrey had signified so much, the maiden resumed her message. "To all true crusaders, therefore, comrades of Godfrey of Bouillon, and especially to the Duke himself,—to all, I say, excepting Bohemond of Tarentum, whom he counts unworthy of his notice——"

"Hah! me unworthy of his notice," said Bohemond. "What mean you by that, damsel? — But the Count of Paris shall answer it to me."

"Under your favour, Sir Bohemond," said Godfrey, "no. Our articles renounce the sending of challenges among ourselves, and the matter, if not

dropt betwixt the parties, must be referred to the voice of this honourable council."

"I think I guess the business now, my Lord," said Bohemond. "The Count of Paris is disposed to turn and tear me, because I offered him good counsel on the evening before we left Constantinople, when he neglected to accept or be guided by it——"

"It will be the more easily explained when we have heard his message," said Godfrey.—"Speak forth Lord Robert of Paris's charge, damsel, that we may take some order with that which now seems a perplexed business."

Bertha resumed her message; and, having briefly narrated the recent events, thus concluded:—"The battle is to be done to-morrow about two hours after daybreak, and the Count entreats of the noble Duke of Lorraine that he will permit some fifty of the lances of France to attend the deed of arms, and secure that fair and honourable conduct which he has otherwise some doubts of receiving at the hands of his adversary. Or if any young and gallant knight should, of his own free will, wish to view the said combat, the Count will feel his presence as an honour; always he desires that the name of such knight be numbered carefully with the armed crusaders who shall attend in the lists, and that the whole shall be limited, by Duke Godfrey's own inspection, to fifty lances only, which are enough to obtain the protection required, while more would be considered as a preparation for aggression upon the Grecians, and occasion the revival of disputes which are now happily at rest."

Bertha had no sooner finished delivering her manifesto, and made with great grace her obeisance to the council, than a sort of whisper took place in the assembly, which soon assumed a more lively tone.

Their solemn vow not to turn their back upon Palestine, now that they had set their hands to the plough, was strongly urged by some of the elder knights of the council, and two or three high prelates, who had by this time entered to take share in the deliberations. The young knights, on the other hand, were fired with indignation on hearing the manner in which their comrade had been trepanned; and few of them could think of missing a combat in the lists in a country in which such sights were so rare, and where one was to be fought so near them.

Godfrey rested his brow on his hand, and seemed in great perplexity. To break with the Greeks, after having suffered so many injuries in order to maintain the advantage of keeping the peace with them, seemed very impolitic, and a sacrifice of all he had obtained by a long course of painful forbearance towards Alexius Comnenus. On the other hand, he was bound as a man of honour to resent the injury offered to Count Robert of Paris, whose reckless spirit of chivalry made him the darling of the army. It was the cause, too, of a beautiful lady, and a brave one: every knight in the host would think himself bound, by his vow, to hasten to her defence. When Godfrey spoke it was to complain of the difficulty of the determination, and the short time there was to consider the case.

"With submission to my Lord Duke of Lorraine,"

said Tancred, "I was a knight ere I was a crusader, and took on me the vows of chivalry, ere I placed this blessed sign upon my shoulder; the vow first made must be first discharged. I will therefore do penance for neglecting, for a space, the obligations of the second vow, while I observe that which recalls me to the first duty of knighthood,—the relief of a distressed lady in the hands of men whose conduct towards her, and towards this host, in every respect entitles me to call them treacherous faitours."

"If my kinsman Tancred," said Bohemond, "will check his impetuosity, and you, my lords, will listen, as you have sometimes deigned to do, to my advice, I think I can direct you how to keep clear of any breach of your oath, and yet fully to relieve our distressed fellow-pilgrims. — I see some suspicious looks are cast towards me, which are caused perhaps by the churlish manner in which this violent, and, in this case, almost insane young warrior, has protested against receiving my assistance. My great offence is the having given him warning, by precept and example, of the treachery which was about to be practised against him, and instructed him to use forbearance and temperance. My warning he altogether contemned—my example he neglected to follow, and fell into the snare which was spread, as it were, before his very eyes. Yet the Count of Paris, in rashly contemning me, has acted only from a temper which misfortune and disappointment have rendered irrational and frantic. I am so far from bearing him ill-will, that, with your lordship's permission,

and that of the present council, I will haste to the place of rendezvous with fifty lances, making up the retinue which attends upon each to at least ten men, which will make the stipulated auxiliary force equal to five hundred; and with these I can have little doubt of rescuing the Count and his lady."

"Nobly proposed," said the Duke of Bouillon; "and with a charitable forgiveness of injuries which becomes our Christian expedition. But thou hast forgot the main difficulty, brother Bohemond, that we are sworn never to turn back upon the sacred journey."

"If we can elude that oath upon the present occasion," said Bohemond, "it becomes our duty to do so. Are we such bad horsemen, or are our steeds so awkward, that we cannot rein them back from this to the landing-place at Scutari? We can get them on ship-board in the same retrograde manner, and when we arrive in Europe, where our vow binds us no longer, the Count and Countess of Paris are rescued, and our vow remains entire in the Chancery of Heaven."

A general shout arose—"Long life to the gallant Bohemond!—Shame to us if we do not fly to the assistance of so valiant a knight, and a lady so lovely, since we can do so without breach of our vow."

"The question," said Godfrey, "appears to me to be eluded rather than solved; yet such evasions have been admitted by the most learned and scrupulous clerks; nor do I hesitate to admit of Bohemond's expedient, any more than if the enemy had attacked

our rear, which might have occasioned our countermarching to be a case of absolute necessity."

Some there were in the assembly, particularly the churchmen, inclined to think that the oath by which the crusaders had solemnly bound themselves, ought to be as literally obeyed. But Peter the Hermit, who had a place in the council, and possessed great weight, declared it as his opinion, "That since the precise observance of their vow would tend to diminish the forces of the crusade, it was in fact unlawful, and should not be kept according to the literal meaning, if, by a fair construction, it could be eluded."

He offered himself to back the animal which he bestrode—that is, his ass; and though he was diverted from shewing this example by the remonstrances of Godfrey of Bouillon, who was afraid of his becoming a scandal in the eyes of the heathen, yet he so prevailed by his arguments, that the knights, far from scrupling to countermarch, eagerly contended which should have the honour of making one of the party which should retrograde to Constantinople, see the combat, and bring back to the host in safety the valorous Count of Paris, of whose victory no one doubted, and his Amazonian Countess.

This emulation was also put an end to by the authority of Godfrey, who himself selected the fifty knights who were to compose the party. They were chosen from different nations, and the command of the whole was given to young Tancred of Otranto. Notwithstanding the claim of Bohemond, Godfrey detained the latter, under the pretext that his know-

ledge of the country and people was absolutely necessary to enable the council to form the plan of the campaign in Syria; but in reality he dreaded the selfishness of a man of great ingenuity as well as military skill, who, finding himself in a separate command, might be tempted, should opportunities arise, to enlarge his own power and dominion, at the expense of the pious purposes of the crusade in general. The younger men of the expedition were chiefly anxious to procure such horses as had been thoroughly trained, and could go through with ease and temper the manœuvre of equitation, by which it was designed to render legitimate the movement which they had recourse to. The selection was at length made, and the detachment ordered to draw up in the rear, or upon the eastward line of the Christian encampment. In the meanwhile, Godfrey charged Bertha with a message for the Count of Paris, in which, slightly censuring him for not observing more caution in his intercourse with the Greeks, he informed him that he had sent a detachment of fifty lances, with the corresponding squires, pages, men-at-arms, and cross-bows, five hundred in number, commanded by the valiant Tancred, to his assistance. The Duke also informed him, that he had added a suit of armour of the best temper Milan could afford, together with a trusty war-horse, which he entreated him to use upon the field of battle; for Bertha had not omitted to intimate Count Robert's want of the means of knightly equipment. The horse was brought before the pavilion accordingly, completely barbed or armed in steel, and laden with ar-

mour for the knight's body. Godfrey himself put the bridle into Bertha's hand.

"Thou need'st not fear to trust thyself with this steed, he is as gentle and docile as he is fleet and brave. Place thyself on his back, and take heed thou stir not from the side of the noble Prince Tancred of Otranto, who will be the faithful defender of a maiden that has this day shewn dexterity, courage, and fidelity."

Bertha bowed low, as her cheeks glowed at praise from one whose talents and worth were in such general esteem, as to have raised him to the distinguished situation of leader of a host which numbered in it the bravest and most distinguished captains of Christendom.

"Who are yon two persons?" continued Godfrey, speaking of the companions of Bertha, whom he saw in the distance before the tent.

"The one," answered the damsel, "is the master of the ferry-boat which brought me over; and the other an old Varangian who came hither as my protector."

"As they may come to employ their eyes here, and their tongues on the opposite side," returned the general of the crusaders, "I do not think it prudent to let them accompany you. They shall remain here for some short time. The citizens of Scutari will not comprehend for some space what our intention is, and I could wish Prince Tancred and his attendants to be the first to announce their own arrival."

Bertha accordingly intimated the pleasure of the French general to the parties, without naming his

motives; when the ferryman began to exclaim on the hardship of intercepting him in his trade, and Osmund to complain of being detained from his duties. But Bertha, by the orders of Godfrey, left them, with the assurance that they would be soon at liberty. Finding themselves thus abandoned, each applied himself to his favourite amusement. The ferryman occupied himself in staring about at all that was new; and Osmund, having in the meantime accepted an offer of breakfast from some of the domestics, was presently engaged with a flask of such red wine as would have reconciled him to a worse lot than that which he at present experienced.

The detachment of Tancred, fifty spears and their armed retinue, which amounted fully to five hundred men, after having taken a short and hasty refreshment, were in arms and mounted before the sultry hour of noon. After some manœuvres, of which the Greeks of Scutari, whose curiosity was awakened by the preparations of the detachment, were at a loss to comprehend the purpose, they formed into a single column, having four men in front. When the horses were in this position, the whole riders at once began to rein back. The action was one to which both the cavaliers and their horses were well accustomed, nor did it at first afford much surprise to the spectators; but when the same retrograde evolution was continued, and the body of crusaders seemed about to enter the town of Scutari in so extraordinary a fashion, some idea of the truth began to occupy the citizens. The cry at length was general, when Tancred and a few others, whose

horses were unusually well trained, arrived at the port, and possessed themselves of a galley, into which they led their horses, and, disregarding all opposition from the Imperial officers of the haven, pushed the vessel off from the shore.

Other cavaliers did not accomplish their purpose so easily; the riders, or the horses, were less accustomed to continue in the constrained pace for such a considerable length of time, so that many of the knights, having retrograded for one or two hundred yards, thought their vow was sufficiently observed by having so far deferred to it, and riding in the ordinary manner into the town, seized without farther ceremony on some vessels, which, notwithstanding the orders of the Greek Emperor, had been allowed to remain on the Asiatic side of the strait. Some less able horsemen met with various accidents; for though it was a proverb of the time, that nothing was so bold as a blind horse, yet from this mode of equitation, where neither horse nor rider saw the way he was going, some steeds were overthrown, other backed upon dangerous obstacles; and the bones of the cavaliers themselves suffered much more than would have been the case in an ordinary march.

Those horsemen, also, who met with falls, incurred the danger of being slain by the Greeks, had not Godfrey, surmounting his religious scruples, despatched a squadron to extricate them—a task which they performed with great ease. The greater part of Tancred's followers succeeded in embarking, as was intended, nor was there more than a score or two

finally amissing. To accomplish their voyage, however, even the Prince of Otranto himself, and most of his followers, were obliged to betake themselves to the unknightly labours of the oar. This they found extremely difficult, as well from the state both of the tide and the wind, as from the want of practice at the exercise. Godfrey in person viewed their progress anxiously, from a neighbouring height, and perceived with regret the difficulty which they found in making their way, which was still more increased by the necessity for their keeping in a body, and waiting for the slowest and worst manned vessels, which considerably detained those that were more expeditious. They made some progress, however; nor had the commander-in-chief the least doubt, that before sunset they would safely reach the opposite side of the strait.

He retired at length from his post of observation, having placed a careful sentinel in his stead, with directions to bring him word the instant that the detachment reached the opposite shore. This the soldier could easily discern by the eye, if it was daylight at the time; if, on the contrary, it was night before they could arrive, the Prince of Otranto had orders to shew certain lights, which, in case of their meeting resistance from the Greeks, should be arranged in a peculiar manner, so as to indicate danger.

Godfrey then explained to the Greek authorities of Scutari, whom he summoned before him, the necessity there was that he should keep in readiness such vessels as could be procured, with which, in

case of need, he was determined to transport a strong division from his army to support those who had gone before. He then rode back to his camp, the confused murmurs of which, rendered more noisy by the various discussions concerning the events of the day, rolled off from the numerous host of the crusaders, and mingled with the hoarse sound of the many-billowed Hellespont.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

All is prepared—the chambers of the mine
Are cramm'd with the combustible, which, harmless
While yet unkindled, as the sable sand,
Needs but a spark to change its nature so,
That he who wakes it from its slumbrous mood,
Dreads scarce the explosion less than he who knows
That 'tis his towers which meet its fury.

ANONYMOUS.

WHEN the sky is darkened suddenly, and the atmosphere grows thick and stifling, the lower ranks of creation entertain the ominous sense of a coming tempest. The birds fly to the thickets, the wild creatures retreat to the closest covers which their instinct gives them the habit of frequenting, and domestic animals shew their apprehension of the approaching thunderstorm by singular actions and movements inferring fear and disturbance.

It seems that human nature, when its original habits are cultivated and attended to, possesses, on similar occasions, something of that prescient foreboding which announces the approaching tempest to the inferior ranks of creation. The cultivation of our intellectual powers goes perhaps too far, when it teaches us entirely to suppress and disregard those natural feelings, which were originally designed as sentinels by which nature warned us of impending danger.

Something of the kind, however, still remains, and that species of feeling which announces to us sorrowful or alarming tidings, may be said, like the prophecies of the weird sisters, to come over us like a sudden cloud.

During the fatal day which was to precede the combat of the Cæsar with the Count of Paris, there were current through the city of Constantinople the most contradictory, and at the same time the most terrific reports. Privy conspiracy, it was alleged, was on the very eve of breaking out; open war, it was reported by others, was about to shake her banners over the devoted city; the precise cause was not agreed upon, any more than the nature of the enemy. Some said that the barbarians from the borders of Thracia, the Hungarians, as they were termed, and the Comani, were on their march from the frontiers to surprise the city; another report stated that the Turks, who, during this period, were established in Asia, had resolved to prevent the threatened attack of the crusaders upon Palestine, by surprising not only the Western Pilgrims, but the Christians of the East, by one of their innumerable invasions, executed with their characteristic rapidity.

Another report, approaching more near to the truth, declared that the crusaders themselves, having discovered their various causes of complaint against Alexius Comnenus, had resolved to march back their united forces to the capital, with a view of dethroning or chastising him; and the citizens were dreadfully alarmed for the consequences of the

resentment of men so fierce in their habits and so strange in their manners. In short, although they did not all agree on the precise cause of danger, it was yet generally allowed that something of a dreadful kind was impending, which appeared to be in a certain degree confirmed by the motions that were taking place among the troops. The Varangians, as well as the Immortals, were gradually assembled, and placed in occupation of the strongest parts of the city, until at length the fleet of galleys, row-boats, and transports, occupied by Tancred and his party, were observed to put themselves in motion from Scutari, and attempt to gain such a height in the narrow sea, as upon the turn of the tide should transport them to the port of the capital.

Alexius Comnenus was himself struck at this unexpected movement on the part of the crusaders. Yet, after some conversation with Hereward, on whom he had determined to repose his confidence, and had now gone too far to retreat, he became reassured, the more especially by the limited size of the detachment which seemed to meditate so bold a measure as an attack upon his capital. To those around him he said with carelessness, that it was hardly to be supposed that a trumpet could blow to the charge, within hearing of the crusaders' camp, without some out of so many knights coming forth to see the cause and the issue of the conflict.

The conspirators also had their secret fears when the little armament of Tancred had been seen on the straits. Agelastes mounted a mule, and went to the shore of the sea, at the place now called Galata. He

met Bertha's old ferryman, whom Godfrey had set at liberty, partly in contempt, and partly that the report he was likely to make, might serve to amuse the conspirators in the city. Closely examined by Agelastes, he confessed that the present detachment, so far as he understood, was despatched at the instance of Bohemond, and was under the command of his kinsman Tancred, whose well-known banner was floating from the headmost vessel. This gave courage to Agelastes, who, in the course of his intrigues, had opened a private communication with the wily and ever mercenary Prince of Antioch. The object of the philosopher had been to obtain from Bohemond a body of his followers to co-operate in the intended conspiracy, and fortify the party of insurgents. It is true, that Bohemond had returned no answer, but the account now given by the ferryman, and the sight of Tancred the kinsman of Bohemond's banner displayed on the straits, satisfied the philosopher that his offers, his presents, and his promises, had gained to his side the avaricious Italian, and that this band had been selected by Bohemond, and were coming to act in his favour.

As Agelastes turned to go off, he almost jostled a person, as much muffled up, and apparently as unwilling to be known, as the philosopher himself. Alexius Comnenus, however—for it was the Emperor himself—knew Agelastes, though rather from his stature and gestures, than his countenance; and could not forbear whispering in his ear, as he passed, the well-known lines, to which the pretended sage's various acquisitions gave some degree of point:—

"Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes,
Augur, schœnobates, medicus, magus; omnia novit.
Græculus esuriens in cælum, jusseris, ibit." *

Agelastes first started at the unexpected sound of the Emperor's voice, yet immediately recovered presence of mind, the want of which had made him suspect himself betrayed; and without taking notice of the rank of the person to whom he spoke, he answered by a quotation which should return the alarm he had received. The speech that suggested itself was said to be that which the Phantom of Cleonice dinned into the ears of the tyrant who murdered her:—

"Tu cole justitiam; teque atque alios manet ultor." †

The sentence, and the recollections which accompanied it, thrilled through the heart of the Emperor, who walked on, however, without any notice or reply.

"The vile conspirator," he said, "had his associates around him, otherwise he had not hazarded that threat. Or it may have been worse—Agelastes himself, on the very brink of this world, may have obtained that singular glance into futurity proper to that situation, and perhaps speaks less from his own reflection than from a strange spirit of prescience, which dictates his words. Have I, then, in earnest sinned so far in my imperial duty, as to make it just

* The lines of Juvenal imitated by Johnson in his *London*—
"All sciences a fasting Monsieur knows,
And bids him go to hell—to hell he goes."

† "Do thou cultivate justice: for thee and for others there remains an avenger."—OVID. MET.

to apply to me the warning used by the injured Cleonice to her ravisher and murderer? Methinks I have not. Methinks that at less expense than that of a just severity, I could ill have kept my seat in the high place where Heaven has been pleased to seat me, and where, as a ruler, I am bound to maintain my station. Methinks the sum of those who have experienced my clemency may be well numbered with that of such as have sustained the deserved punishments of their guilt.—But has that vengeance, however deserved in itself, been always taken in a legal or justifiable manner? My conscience, I doubt, will hardly answer so home a question; and where is the man, had he the virtues of Antoninus himself, that can hold so high and responsible a place, yet sustain such an interrogation as is implied in that sort of warning which I have received from this traitor? *Tu cole justitiam*—we all need to use justice to others—*Teque atque alios manet ultor*—we are all amenable to an avenging being—I will see the Patriarch—instantly will I see him; and by confessing my transgressions to the Church, I will, by her plenary indulgence, acquire the right of spending the last day of my reign in a consciousness of innocence, or at least of pardon—a state of mind rarely the lot of those whose lines have fallen in lofty places."

So saying, he passed to the palace of Zosimus the Patriarch, to whom he could unbosom himself with more safety, because he had long considered Agelastes as a private enemy to the church, and a man attached to the ancient doctrines of heathenism. In the councils of the state they were also opposed to

each other; nor did the Emperor doubt, that in communicating the secret of the conspiracy to the Patriarch, he was sure to attain a loyal and firm supporter in the defence which he proposed to himself. He therefore gave a signal by a low whistle, and a confidential officer, well mounted, approached him, who attended him in his ride, though unostentatiously, and at some distance.

In this manner, therefore, Alexius Comnenus proceeded to the palace of the Patriarch, with as much speed as was consistent with his purpose of avoiding to attract any particular notice as he passed through the street. During the whole ride, the warning of Agelastes repeatedly occurred to him, and his conscience reminded him of too many actions of his reign which could only be justified by necessity, emphatically said to be the tyrant's plea, and which were of themselves deserving the dire vengeance so long delayed.

When he came in sight of the splendid towers which adorned the front of the patriarchal palace, he turned aside from the lofty gates, repaired to a narrow court, and again giving his mule to his attendant, he stopt before a postern, whose low arch and humble architrave seemed to exclude the possibility of its leading to any place of importance. On knocking, however, a priest of an inferior order opened the door, who, with a deep reverence, received the Emperor so soon as he had made himself known, and conducted him into the interior of the palace. Demanding a secret interview with the Patriarch, Alexius was then ushered into his private library,

where he was received by the aged priest with the deepest respect, which the nature of his communication soon changed into horror and astonishment.

Although Alexius was supposed by many of his own court, and particularly by some members of his own family, to be little better than a hypocrite in his religious professions, yet such severe observers were unjust in branding him with a name so odious. He was indeed aware of the great support which he received from the good opinion of the clergy, and to them he was willing to make sacrifices for the advantage of the church, or of individual prelates who manifested fidelity to the crown; but though, on the one hand, such sacrifices were rarely made by Alexius, without a view to temporal policy, yet, on the other, he regarded them as recommended by his devotional feelings, and took credit to himself for various grants and actions, as dictated by sincere piety, which, in another aspect, were the fruits of temporal policy. His mode of looking on these measures was that of a person with oblique vision, who sees an object in a different manner, according to the point from which he chances to contemplate it.

The Emperor placed his own errors of government before the Patriarch in his confession, giving due weight to every breach of morality as it occurred, and stripping from them the lineaments and palliative circumstances which had in his own imagination lessened their guilt. The Patriarch heard, to his astonishment, the real thread of many a court intrigue, which had borne a very different appearance, till the Emperor's narrative either justified his

conduct upon the occasion, or left it totally unjustifiable. Upon the whole, the balance was certainly more in favour of Alexius than the Patriarch had supposed likely in that more distant view he had taken of the intrigues of the court, when, as usual, the ministers and the courtiers endeavoured to make up for the applause which they had given in council to the most blameable actions of the absolute monarch, by elsewhere imputing to his motives greater guilt than really belonged to them. Many men who had fallen sacrifices, it was supposed, to the personal spleen or jealousy of the Emperor, appeared to have been in fact removed from life, or from liberty, because their enjoying either was inconsistent with the quiet of the state and the safety of the monarch.

Zosimus also learned, what he perhaps already suspected, that amidst the profound silence of despotism which seemed to pervade the Grecian empire, it heaved frequently with convulsive throes, which ever and anon made obvious the existence of a volcano under the surface. Thus, while smaller delinquencies, or avowed discontent with the Imperial government, seldom occurred, and were severely punished when they did, the deepest and most mortal conspiracies against the life and the authority of the Emperor were cherished by those nearest to his person; and he was often himself aware of them, though it was not until they approached an explosion that he dared act upon his knowledge, and punish the conspirators.

The whole treason of the Cæsar, with his associates, Agelastes and Achilles Tatius, was heard by

the Patriarch with wonder and astonishment, and he was particularly surprised at the dexterity with which the Emperor, knowing the existence of so dangerous a conspiracy at home, had been able to parry the danger from the crusaders occurring at the same moment.

"In that respect," said the Emperor, to whom indeed the churchman hinted his surprise, "I have been singularly unfortunate. Had I been secure of the forces of my own empire, I might have taken one out of two manly and open courses with these frantic warriors of the west—I might, my reverend father, have devoted the sums paid to Bohemond and other of the more selfish among the crusaders, to the honest and open support of the army of western Christians, and safely transported them to Palestine, without exposing them to the great loss which they are likely to sustain by the opposition of the Infidels; their success would have been in fact my own, and a Latin kingdom in Palestine, defended by its steel-clad warriors, would have been a safe and unexpugnable barrier of the empire against the Saracens. Or, if it was thought more expedient for the protection of the empire and the holy church, over which you are ruler, we might at once, and by open force, have defended the frontiers of our states, against a host commanded by so many different and discording chiefs, and advancing upon us with such equivocal intentions. If the first swarm of these locusts, under him whom they called Walter the Penniless, was thinned by the Hungarians, and totally destroyed

by the Turks, as the pyramids of bones on the frontiers of the country still keep in memory, surely the united forces of the Grecian empire would have had little difficulty in scattering this second flight, though commanded by these Godfreys, Bohemonds, and Tancreds."

The Patriarch was silent, for though he disliked, or rather detested the crusaders, as members of the Latin church, he yet thought it highly doubtful that in feats of battle they could have been met and overcome by the Grecian forces.

"At any rate," said Alexius, rightly interpreting his silence, "if vanquished, I had fallen under my shield as a Greek emperor should, nor had I been forced into these mean measures of attacking men by stealth, and with forces disguised as infidels; while the lives of the faithful soldiers of the empire, who have fallen in obscure skirmishes, had better, both for them and me, been lost bravely in their ranks, avowedly fighting for their native Emperor and their native country. Now, and as the matter stands, I shall be handed down to posterity as a wily tyrant, who engaged his subjects in fatal feuds for the safety of his own obscure life. Patriarch! these crimes rest not with me, but with the rebels whose intrigues compelled me into such courses—What, reverend father, will be my fate hereafter?—and in what light shall I descend to posterity, the author of so many disasters?"

"For futurity," said the Patriarch, "your grace hath referred yourself to the holy church, which hath power to bind and to loose; your means of propitia-

ting her are ample, and I have already indicated such as she may reasonably expect, in consequence of your repentance and forgiveness."

"They shall be granted," replied the Emperor, "in their fullest extent; nor will I injure you in doubting their effect in the next world. In this present state of existence, however, the favourable opinion of the church may do much for me during this important crisis. If we understand each other, good Zosimus, her doctors and bishops are to thunder in my behalf, nor is my benefit from her pardon to be deferred till the funeral monument closes upon me?"

"Certainly not," said Zosimus; "the conditions which I have already stipulated being strictly attended to."

"And my memory in history," said Alexius, "in what manner is that to be preserved?"

"For that," answered the Patriarch, "your Imperial Majesty must trust to the filial piety and literary talents of your accomplished daughter, Anna Comnena."

The Emperor shook his head. "This unhappy Cæsar," he said, "is like to make a quarrel between us; for I shall scarce pardon so ungrateful a rebel as he is, because my daughter clings to him with a woman's fondness. Besides, good Zosimus, it is not, I believe, the page of a historian such as my daughter that is most likely to be received without challenge by posterity. Some Procopius, some philosophical slave, starving in a garret, aspires to write the life of an Emperor whom he durst not approach; and although the principal merit of his production

be, that it contains particulars upon the subject which no man durst have promulgated while the prince was living, yet no man hesitates to admit such as true when he has passed from the scene."

"On that subject," said Zosimus, "I can neither afford your Imperial Majesty relief nor protection. If, however, your memory is unjustly slandered upon earth, it will be a matter of indifference to your Highness, who will be then, I trust, enjoying a state of beatitude which idle slander cannot assail. The only way, indeed, to avoid it while on this side of time, would be to write your Majesty's own memoirs while you are yet in the body; so convinced am I that it is in your power to assign legitimate excuses for those actions of your life, which, without your doing so, would seem most worthy of censure."

"Change we the subject," said the Emperor; "and since the danger is imminent, let us take care for the present, and leave future ages to judge for themselves.—What circumstance is it, reverend father, in your opinion, which encourages these conspirators to make so audacious an appeal to the populace and the Grecian soldiers?"

"Certainly," answered the Patriarch, "the most irritating incident of your Highness's reign was the fate of Ursel, who, submitting, it is said, upon capitulation, for life, limb, and liberty, was starved to death by your orders, in the dungeons of the Blacquernal, and whose courage, liberality, and other popular virtues, are still fondly remembered by the citizens of this metropolis, and by the soldiers of the guard, called Immortal."

"And this," said the Emperor, fixing his eye upon his confessor, "your reverence esteems actually the most dangerous point of the popular tumult?"

"I cannot doubt," said the Patriarch, "that his very name, boldly pronounced, and artfully repeated, will be the watchword, as has been plotted, of a horrible tumult."

"I thank Heaven!" said the Emperor; "on that particular I will be on my guard. Good-night to your reverence! and, believe me, that all in this scroll, to which I have set my hand, shall be with the utmost fidelity accomplished. Be not, however, over impatient in this business;—such a shower of benefits falling at once upon the Church, would make men suspicious that the prelates and ministers proceeded rather as acting upon a bargain between the Emperor and Patriarch, than as paying or receiving an atonement offered by a sinner in excuse of his crimes. This would be injurious, father, both to yourself and me."

"All regular delay," said the Patriarch, "shall be interposed at your Highness's pleasure; and we shall trust to you for recollection that the bargain, if it could be termed one, was of your own seeking, and that the benefit to the Church was contingent upon the pardon and the support which she has afforded to your Majesty."

"True," said the Emperor—"most true—nor shall I forget it. Once more adieu, and forget not what I have told thee. This is a night, Zosimus, in which the Emperor must toil like a slave, if he means not to return to the humble Alexius Comnenus, and even then there were no resting-place."

So saying, he took leave of the Patriarch, who was highly gratified with the advantages he had obtained for the Church, which many of his predecessors had struggled for in vain. He resolved, therefore, to support the staggering Alexius.

GALLEYS, *temp.* TALE.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

Heaven knows its time; the bullet has its billet,
Arrow and javelin each its destined purpose;
The fated beasts of Nature's lower strain
Have each their separate task.

OLD PLAY.

AGELASTES, after crossing the Emperor in the manner we have already described, and after having taken such measures as occurred to him to ensure the success of the conspiracy, returned to the lodge of his garden, where the lady of the Count of Paris still remained, her only companion being an old woman named Vexhelia, the wife of the soldier who accompanied Bertha to the camp of the crusaders; the kind-hearted maiden having stipulated that, during her absence, her mistress was not to be left without an attendant, and that attendant connected with the Varangian guard. He had been all day playing the part of the ambitious politician, the selfish time-server, the dark and subtle conspirator; and now it seemed, as if to exhaust the catalogue of his various parts in the human drama, he chose to exhibit himself in the character of the wily sophist, and justify, or seem to justify, the arts by which he had risen to wealth and eminence, and hoped even now to arise to royalty itself.

"Fair Countess," he said, "what occasion is there for your wearing this veil of sadness over a countenance so lovely?"

"Do you suppose me," said Brenhilda, "a stock, a stone, or a creature without the feelings of a sensitive being, that I should endure mortification, imprisonment, danger, and distress, without expressing the natural feelings of humanity? Do you imagine that to a lady like me, as free as the unreclaimed falcon, you can offer the insult of captivity, without my being sensible to the disgrace, or incensed against the authors of it? And dost thou think that I will receive consolation at thy hands—at thine—one of the most active artificers in this web of treachery in which I am so basely entangled?"

"Not entangled certainly by my means"—answered Agelastes; "clap your hands, call for what you wish, and the slave who refuses instant obedience had better been unborn. Had I not, with reference to your safety and your honour, agreed for a short time to be your keeper, that office would have been usurped by the Cæsar, whose object you know, and may partly guess the modes by which it would be pursued. Why then dost thou childishly weep at being held for a short space in an honourable restraint, which the renowned arms of your husband will probably put an end to long ere to-morrow at noon?"

"Canst thou not comprehend," said the Countess, "thou man of many words, but of few honourable thoughts, that a heart like mine, which has been trained in the feelings of reliance upon my own

worth and valour, must be necessarily affected with shame at being obliged to accept, even from the sword of a husband, that safety which I would gladly have owed only to my own?"

"Thou art misled, Countess," answered the philosopher, "by thy pride, a failing predominant in woman. Thinkest thou there has been no offensive assumption in laying aside the character of a mother and a wife, and adopting that of one of those brain-sick female fools, who, like the bravoes of the other sex, sacrifice everything that is honourable or useful to a frantic and insane affectation of courage? Believe me, fair lady, that the true system of virtue consists in filling thine own place gracefully in society, breeding up thy children, and delighting those of the other sex; and any thing beyond this, may well render thee hateful or terrible, but can add nothing to thy amiable qualities."

"Thou pretendest," said the Countess, "to be a philosopher; methinks thou shouldst know, that the fame which hangs its chaplet on the tomb of a brave hero or heroine, is worth all the petty engagements in which ordinary persons spend the current of their time. One hour of life, crowded to the full with glorious action, and filled with noble risks, is worth whole years of those mean observances of paltry decorum, in which men steal through existence, like sluggish waters through a marsh, without either honour or observation."

"Daughter," said Agelastes, approaching nearer to the lady, "it is with pain I see you bewildered in errors which a little calm reflection might remove.

We may flatter ourselves, and human vanity usually does so, that beings infinitely more powerful than those belonging to mere humanity, are employed daily in measuring out the good and evil of this world, the termination of combats, or the fate of empires, according to their own ideas of what is right or wrong, or, more properly, according to what we ourselves conceive to be such. The Greek heathens, renowned for their wisdom, and glorious for their actions, explained to men of ordinary minds the supposed existence of Jupiter and his Pantheon, where various deities presided over various virtues and vices, and regulated the temporal fortune and future happiness of such as practised them. The more learned and wise of the ancients rejected such the vulgar interpretation, and wisely, although affecting a deference to the public faith, denied before their disciples in private, the gross fallacies of Tartarus and Olympus, the vain doctrines concerning the gods themselves, and the extravagant expectations which the vulgar entertained of an immortality, supposed to be possessed by creatures who were in every respect mortal, both in the conformation of their bodies, and in the internal belief of their souls. Of these wise and good men some granted the existence of the supposed deities, but denied that they cared about the actions of mankind any more than those of the inferior animals. A merry, jovial, careless life, such as the followers of Epicurus would choose for themselves, was what they assigned for those gods whose being they admitted. Others, more bold or more consistent, entirely denied the existence of deities who apparently

had no proper object or purpose, and believed that such of them, whose being and attributes were proved to us by no supernatural appearances, had in reality no existence whatever."

"Stop, wretch!" said the Countess, "and know that thou speakest not to one of those blinded heathens, of whose abominable doctrines you are detailing the result. Know, that if an erring, I am nevertheless a sincere daughter of the Church, and this cross displayed on my shoulder, is a sufficient emblem of the vows I have undertaken in its cause. Be therefore wary, as thou art wily; for, believe me, if thou scoffest or utterest reproach against my holy religion, what I am unable to answer in language, I will reply to, without hesitation, with the point of my dagger."

"To that argument," said Agelastes, drawing back from the neighbourhood of Brenhilda, "believe me, fair lady, I am very unwilling to urge your gentleness. But although I shall not venture to say anything of those superior and benevolent powers to whom you ascribe the management of the world, you will surely not take offence at my noticing those base superstitions which have been adopted in explanation of what is called by the Magi, the Evil Principle. Was there ever received into a human creed, a being so mean—almost so ridiculous—as the Christian Satan? A goatish figure and limbs, with grotesque features, formed to express the most execrable passions; a degree of power scarce inferior to that of the Deity; and a talent at the same time scarce equal to that of the stupidest of the lowest order! What is he, this being, who is at least the second arbiter

of the human race, save an immortal spirit, with the petty spleen and spite of a vindictive old man or old woman?"

Agelastes made a singular pause in this part of his discourse. A mirror of considerable size hung in the apartment, so that the philosopher could see in its reflection the figure of Brenhilda, and remark the change of her countenance, though she had averted her face from him in hatred of the doctrines which he promulgated. On this glass the philosopher had his eyes naturally fixed, and he was confounded at perceiving a figure glide from behind the shadow of a curtain, and glare at him with the supposed mien and expression of the Satan of monkish mythology, or a satyr of the heathen age.

"Man!" said Brenhilda, whose attention was attracted by this extraordinary apparition, as it seemed, of the fiend, "have thy wicked words, and still more wicked thoughts, brought the devil amongst us? If so, dismiss him instantly, else, by Our Lady of the Broken Lances! thou shalt know better than at present, what is the temper of a Frankish maiden, when in presence of the fiend himself, and those who pretend skill to raise him! I wish not to enter into a contest unless compelled; but if I am obliged to join battle with an enemy so horrible, believe me, no one shall say that Brenhilda feared him."

Agelastes, after looking with surprise and horror at the figure as reflected in the glass, turned back his head to examine the substance, of which the reflection was so strange. The object, however, had disappeared behind the curtain, under which it pro-

bably lay hid, and it was after a minute or two that the half-gibing, half-scowling countenance shewed itself again in the same position in the mirror.

"By the gods!" said Agelastes——

"In whom but now," said the Countess, "you professed unbelief."

"By the gods!" repeated Agelastes, in part recovering himself, "it is Sylvan! that singular mockery of humanity, who was said to have been brought from Taprobana. I warrant he also believes in his jolly god Pan, or the veteran Sylvanus. He is to the uninitiated a creature whose appearance is full of terrors, but he shrinks before the philosopher like ignorance before knowledge." So saying, he with one hand pulled down the curtain, under which the animal had nestled itself when it entered from the garden-window of the pavilion, and with the other, in which he had a staff uplifted, threatened to chastise the creature, with the words—"How now, Sylvanus! what insolence is this?—To your place!"

As, in uttering these words, he struck the animal, the blow unluckily lighted upon his wounded hand, and recalled its bitter smart. The wild temper of the creature returned, unsubdued for the moment by any awe of man; uttering a fierce, and, at the same time, stifled cry, it flew on the philosopher, and clasped its strong and sinewy arms about his throat with the utmost fury. The old man twisted and struggled to deliver himself from the creature's grasp, but in vain. Sylvan kept hold of his prize, compressed his sinewy arms, and abode by his purpose of not quitting his hold of the philosopher's

throat until he had breathed his last. Two more bitter yells, accompanied each with a desperate contortion of the countenance, and squeeze of the hands, concluded, in less than five minutes, the dreadful strife.

Agelastes lay dead upon the ground, and his assassin Sylvan, springing from the body as if terrified and alarmed at what he had done, made his escape by the window. The Countess stood in astonishment, not knowing exactly whether she had witnessed a supernatural display of the judgment of Heaven, or an instance of its vengeance by mere mortal means. Her new attendant Vexhelia was no less astonished, though her acquaintance with the animal was considerably more intimate.

"Lady," she said, "that gigantic creature is an animal of great strength, resembling mankind in form, but huge in its size, and encouraged by its immense power, sometimes malevolent in its intercourse with mortals. I have heard the Varangians often talk of it as belonging to the Imperial museum. It is fitting we remove the body of this unhappy man, and hide it in a plot of shrubbery in the garden. It is not likely that he will be missed to-night, and to-morrow there will be other matter astir, which will probably prevent much inquiry about him." The Countess Brenhilda assented, for she was not one of those timorous females to whom the countenances of the dead are objects of terror.

Trusting to the parole which she had given, Agelastes had permitted the Countess and her attendant the freedom of his gardens, of that part at least ad-

jacent to the pavilion. They therefore were in little risk of interruption as they bore forth the dead body between them, and without much trouble disposed of it in the thickest part of one of the bosquets with which the garden was studded.

As they returned to their place of abode or confinement, the Countess, half speaking to herself, half addressing Vexhelia, said, "I am sorry for this; not that the infamous wretch did not deserve the full punishment of Heaven coming upon him in the very moment of blasphemy and infidelity, but because the courage and truth of the unfortunate Brenhilda may be brought into suspicion, as his slaughter took place when he was alone with her and her attendant, and as no one was witness of the singular manner in which the old blasphemer met his end.—Thou knowest," she added, addressing herself to Heaven—"thou! blessed Lady of the Broken Lances, the protectress both of Brenhilda and her husband, well knowest, that whatever faults may be mine, I am free from the slightest suspicion of treachery; and into thy hands I put my cause, with a perfect reliance upon thy wisdom and bounty to bear evidence in my favour." So saying, they returned to the lodge unseen, and with pious and submissive prayers, the Countess closed that eventful evening.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

Will you hear of a Spanish lady,
How she wooed an Englishman?
Garments gay, as rich as may be,
Deck'd with jewels she had on.
Of a comely countenance and grace was she,
And by birth and parentage of high degree.

OLD BALLAD.

WE left Alexius Comnenus after he had unloaded his conscience in the ears of the Patriarch, and received from him a faithful assurance of the pardon and patronage of the national Church. He took leave of the dignitary with some exulting exclamations, so unexplicitly expressed, however, that it was by no means easy to conceive the meaning of what he said. His first inquiry, when he reached the Blacquernal, being for his daughter, he was directed to the room encrusted with beautifully carved marble, from which she herself, and many of her race, derived the proud appellation of *Porphyrogenita*, or born in the purple. Her countenance was clouded with anxiety, which, at the sight of her father, broke out into open and uncontrollable grief.

"Daughter," said the Emperor, with a harshness little common to his manner, and a seriousness which he sternly maintained, instead of sympathizing with his daughter's affliction, "as you would prevent

the silly fool with whom you are connected, from displaying himself to the public both as an ungrateful monster and a traitor, you will not fail to exhort him, by due submission, to make his petition for pardon, accompanied with a full confession of his crimes, or, by my sceptre and my crown, he shall die the death! Nor will I pardon any who rushes upon his doom in an open tone of defiance, under such a standard of rebellion as my ungrateful son-in-law has hoisted."

"What can you require of me, father?" said the Princess. "Can you expect that I am to dip my own hands in the blood of this unfortunate man; or wilt thou seek a revenge yet more bloody than that which was exacted by the deities of antiquity, upon those criminals who offended against their divine power?"

"Think not so, my daughter!" said the Emperor; "but rather believe that thou hast the last opportunity afforded by my filial affection, of rescuing, perhaps from death, that silly fool thy husband, who has so richly deserved it."

"My father," said the Princess, "God knows it is not at your risk that I would wish to purchase the life of Nicephorus; but he has been the father of my children, though they are now no more, and women cannot forget that such a tie has existed, even though it has been broken by fate. Permit me only to hope that the unfortunate culprit shall have an opportunity of retrieving his errors; nor shall it, believe me, be my fault, if he resumes those practices, treasonable at once, and unnatural, by which his life is at present endangered."

VIEW OF GALATA, NEAR CONSTANTINOPLE.

"Follow me, then, daughter," said the Emperor, "and know, that to thee alone I am about to intrust a secret, upon which the safety of my life and crown, as well as the pardon of my son-in-law's life, will be found eventually to depend."

He then assumed in haste the garment of a slave of the Seraglio, and commanded his daughter to arrange her dress in a more succinct form, and to take in her hand a lighted lamp.

"Whither are we going, my father?" said Anna Comnena.

"It matters not," replied her father, "since my destiny calls me, and since thine ordains thee to be my torch-bearer. Believe it, and record it, if thou darest, in thy book, that Alexius Comnenus does not, without alarm, descend into those awful dungeons which his predecessors built for men, even when his intentions are innocent, and free from harm. Be silent, and should we meet any inhabitant of those inferior regions, speak not a word, nor make any observation upon his appearance."

Passing through the intricate apartments of the palace, they now came to that large hall through which Hereward had passed on the first night of his introduction to the place of Anna's recitation, called the Temple of the Muses. It was constructed, as we have said, of black marble, dimly illuminated. At the upper end of the apartment was a small altar, on which was laid some incense, while over the smoke was suspended, as if projecting from the wall, two imitations of human hands and arms, which were but imperfectly seen.

At the bottom of this hall, a small iron door led to a narrow and winding staircase, resembling a draw-well in shape and size, the steps of which were excessively steep, and which the Emperor, after a solemn gesture to his daughter commanding her attendance, began to descend with the imperfect light, and by the narrow and difficult steps by which those who visited the under regions of the Blacquernal seemed to bid adieu to the light of day. Door after door they passed in their descent, leading, it was probable, to different ranges of dungeons, from which was obscurely heard the stifled voice of groans and sighs, such as attracted Hereward's attention on a former occasion. The Emperor took no notice of these signs of human misery, and three stories, or ranges, of dungeons had been already passed, ere the father and daughter arrived at the lowest story of the building, the base of which was the solid rock, roughly carved, upon which were erected the side-walls and arches of solid but unpolished marble.

"Here," said Alexius Comnenus, "all hope, all expectation takes farewell, at the turn of a hinge or the grating of a lock. Yet shall not this be always the case—the dead shall revive and resume their right, and the disinherited of these regions shall again prefer their claim to inhabit the upper world. If I cannot entreat Heaven to my assistance, be assured, my daughter, that rather than be the poor animal which I have stooped to be thought, and even to be painted in thy history, I would sooner brave every danger of the multitude which now erect themselves betwixt me and safety. Nothing is re-

solved save that I will live and die an Emperor; and thou, Anna, be assured, that if there is power in the beauty or in the talents, of which so much has been boasted, that power shall be this evening exercised to the advantage of thy parent, from whom it is derived."

"What is it that you mean, Imperial father?—Holy Virgin! is this the promise you made me to save the life of the unfortunate Nicephorus?"

"And so I will," said the Emperor; "and I am now about that action of benevolence. But think not I will once more warm in my bosom the household snake which had so nearly stung me to death. No, daughter, I have provided for thee a fitting husband, in one who is able to maintain and defend the rights of the Emperor thy father;—and beware how thou opposest an obstacle to what is my pleasure! for behold these walls of marble, though unpolished, and recollect it is as possible to die within the marble as to be born there."

The Princess Anna Comnena was frightened at seeing her father in a state of mind entirely different from any which she had before witnessed. "O, Heaven! that my mother were here!" she ejaculated, in the terror of something, she hardly knew what.

"Anna," said the Emperor, "your fears and your screams are alike in vain. I am one of those, who, on ordinary occasions, hardly nourish a wish of my own, and account myself obliged to those who, like my wife and daughter, take care to save me all the trouble of free judgment. But when the vessel is among the breakers, and the master is called to the

helm, believe that no meaner hand shall be permitted to interfere with him, nor will the wife and daughter, whom he indulged in prosperity, be allowed to thwart his will while he can yet call it his own. Thou couldst scarcely fail to understand that I was almost prepared to have given thee, as a mark of my sincerity, to yonder obscure Varangian, without asking question of either birth or blood. Thou mayst hear when I next promise thee to a three years' inhabitant of these vaults, who shall be Cæsar in Briennius's stead, if I can move him to accept a princess for his bride, and an imperial crown for his inheritance, in place of a starving dungeon."

"I tremble at your words, father," said Anna Comnena; "how canst thou trust a man who has felt thy cruelty?—How canst thou dream that aught can ever in sincerity reconcile thee to one whom thou hast deprived of his eyesight?"

"Care not for that," said Alexius; "he becomes mine, or he shall never know what it is to be again his own.—And thou, girl, mayst rest assured that, if I will it, thou art next day the bride of my present captive, or thou retirest to the most severe nunnery, never again to mix with society. Be silent, therefore, and await thy doom, as it shall come, and hope not that thy utmost endeavours can avert the current of thy destiny."

As he concluded this singular dialogue, in which he had assumed a tone to which his daughter was a stranger, and before which she trembled, he passed on through more than one strictly fastened door, while his daughter, with a faltering step, illuminated

him on the obscure road. At length he found admittance by another passage into the cell in which Ursel was confined, and found him reclining in hopeless misery, — all those expectations having faded from his heart which the Count of Paris had by his indomitable gallantry for a time excited. He turned his sightless eyes towards the place where he heard the moving of bolts and the approach of steps.

"A new feature," he said, "in my imprisonment —a man comes with a heavy and determined step, and a woman or a child with one that scarcely presses the floor!—Is it my death that you bring?—Believe me, that I have lived long enough in these dungeons to bid my doom welcome."

"It is not thy death, noble Ursel," said the Emperor in a voice somewhat disguised. "Life, liberty, whatever the world has to give, is placed by the Emperor Alexius at the feet of his noble enemy, and he trusts that many years of happiness and power, together with the command of a large share of the empire, will soon obliterate the recollection of the dungeons of the Blacquernal."

"It cannot be," said Ursel with a sigh. "He upon whose eyes the sun has set even at middle day, can have nothing left to hope from the most advantageous change of circumstances."

"You are not entirely assured of that," said the Emperor; "allow us to convince you that what is intended towards you is truly favourable and liberal, and I hope you will be rewarded by finding that there is more possibility of amendment in your case, than your first apprehensions are willing to receive.

Make an effort, and try whether your eyes are not sensible of the light of the lamp."

"Do with me," said Ursel, "according to your pleasure; I have neither strength to remonstrate, nor the force of mind equal to make me set your cruelty at defiance. Of something like light I am sensible; but whether it is reality or illusion, I cannot determine. If you are come to deliver me from this living sepulchre, I pray God to requite you; and if, under such deceitful pretence, you mean to take my life, I can only commend my soul to Heaven, and the vengeance due to my death to Him who can behold the darkest places in which injustice can shroud itself."

So saying, and the revulsion of his spirits rendering him unable to give almost any other signs of existence, Ursel sunk back upon his seat of captivity, and spoke not another word during the time that Alexius disembarrassed him of those chains which had so long hung about him, that they almost seemed to make a part of his person.

"This is an affair in which thy aid can scarce be sufficient, Anna," said the Emperor; "it would have been well if you and I could have borne him into the open air by our joint strength, for there is little wisdom in shewing the secrets of this prison-house to those to whom they are not yet known; nevertheless, go, my child, and at a short distance from the head of the staircase which we descended, thou wilt find Edward, the bold and trusty Varangian, who on your communicating to him my orders, will come hither and render his assistance; and see

that you send also the experienced leech, Douban."

Terrified, half-stifled, and half-struck with horror, the lady yet felt a degree of relief from the somewhat milder tone in which her father addressed her. With tottering steps, yet in some measure encouraged by the tenor of her instructions, she ascended the staircase which yawned upon these infernal dungeons. As she approached the top, a large and strong figure threw its broad shadow between the lamp and the opening of the hall. Frightened nearly to death at the thoughts of becoming the wife of a squalid wretch like Ursel, a moment of weakness seized upon the Princess's mind, and, when she considered the melancholy option which her father had placed before her, she could not but think that the handsome and gallant Varangian, who had already rescued the royal family from such imminent danger, was a fitter person with whom to unite herself, if she must needs make a second choice, than the singular and disgusting being whom her father's policy had raked from the bottom of the Blacquernal dungeons.

I will not say of poor Anna Comnena, who was a timid but not an unfeeling woman, that she would have embraced such a proposal, had not the life of her present husband Nicephorus Briennius been in extreme danger; and it was obviously the determination of the Emperor, that if he spared him, it should be on the sole condition of unloosing his daughter's hand, and binding her to some one of better faith, and possessed of a greater desire to prove an affectionate son-in-law. Neither did the plan of

adopting the Varangian as a second husband, enter decidedly into the mind of the Princess. The present was a moment of danger, in which her rescue to be successful must be sudden, and perhaps, if once achieved, the lady might have had an opportunity of freeing herself both from Ursel and the Varangian, without disjoining either of them from her father's assistance, or of herself losing it. At any rate, the surest means of safety were to secure, if possible, the young soldier, whose features and appearance were of a kind which rendered the task no way disagreeable to a beautiful woman. The schemes of conquest are so natural to the fair sex, and the whole idea passed so quickly through Anna Comnena's mind, that having first entered while the soldier's shadow was interposed between her and the lamp, it had fully occupied her quick imagination, when, with deep reverence and great surprise at her sudden appearance on the ladder of Acheron, the Varangian advancing, knelt down, and lent his arm to the assistance of the fair lady, in order to help her out of the dreary staircase.

"Dearest Hereward," said the lady, with a degree of intimacy which seemed unusual, "how much do I rejoice, in this dreadful night, to have fallen under your protection! I have been in places which the spirit of hell appears to have contrived for the human race." The alarm of the Princess, the familiarity of a beautiful woman, who, while in mortal fear, seeks refuge, like a frightened dove, in the bosom of the strong and the brave, must be the excuse of Anna Comnena for the tender epithet with which she

greeted Hereward; nor, if he had chosen to answer in the same tone, which, faithful as he was, might have proved the case if the meeting had chanced before he saw Bertha, would the daughter of Alexius have been, to say the truth, irreconcilably offended. Exhausted as she was, she suffered herself to repose upon the breast and shoulder of the Anglo-Saxon; nor did she make an attempt to recover herself, although the decorum of her sex and station seemed to recommend such an exertion. Hereward was obliged himself to ask her, with the unimpassioned and reverential demeanour of a private soldier to a Princess, whether he ought to summon her female attendants? to which she faintly uttered a negative. "No, no"—said she, "I have a duty to execute for my father, and I must not summon eye-witnesses;—he knows me to be in safety, Hereward, since he knows I am with thee; and if I am a burden to you in my present state of weakness, I shall soon recover, if you will set me down upon the marble steps."

"Heaven forbid, lady," said Hereward, "that I were thus neglectful of your Highness's gracious health! I see your two young ladies, Astarte and Violante, are in quest of you—Permit me to summon them hither, and I will keep watch upon you if you are unable to retire to your chamber, where, methinks, the present disorder of your nerves will be most properly treated."

"Do as thou wilt, barbarian," said the Princess, rallying herself, with a certain degree of pique, arising perhaps from her not thinking more *dramatis personæ* were appropriate to the scene, than the two

who were already upon the stage. Then, as if for the first time, appearing to recollect the message with which she had been commissioned, she exhorted the Varangian to repair instantly to her father.

On such occasions, the slightest circumstances have their effect on the actors. The Anglo-Saxon was sensible that the Princess was somewhat offended, though whether she was so, on account of her being actually in Hereward's arms, or whether the cause of her anger was the being nearly discovered there by the two young maidens, the sentinel did not presume to guess, but departed for the gloomy vaults to join Alexius, with the never-failing double-edged axe, the bane of many a Turk, glittering upon his shoulder.

Astarte and her companion had been despatched by the Empress Irene in search of Anna Comnena, through those apartments of the palace which she was wont to inhabit. The daughter of Alexius could nowhere be found, although the business on which they were seeking her was described by the Empress as of the most pressing nature. Nothing, however, in a palace, passes altogether unespied, so that the Empress's messengers at length received information that their mistress and the Emperor had been seen to descend that gloomy access to the dungeons, which, by allusion to the classical infernal regions, was termed the Pit of Acheron. They came thither accordingly, and we have related the consequences. Hereward thought it necessary to say that her Imperial Highness had swooned upon being suddenly brought into the upper air. The Princess, on the other part, briskly shook off her juvenile at-

tendants, and declared herself ready to proceed to the chamber of her mother. The obeisance which she made Hereward at parting, had something in it of haughtiness, yet evidently qualified by a look of friendship and regard. As she passed an apartment in which some of the royal slaves were in waiting, she addressed to one of them, an old respectable man, of medical skill, a private and hurried order, desiring him to go to the assistance of her father, whom he would find at the bottom of the staircase called the Pit of Acheron, and to take his scimitar along with him. To hear, as usual, was to obey, and Douban, for that was his name, only replied by that significant sign which indicates immediate acquiescence. In the meantime, Anna Comnena herself hastened onward to her mother's apartments, in which she found the Empress alone.

"Go hence, maidens," said Irene, "and do not let any one have access to these apartments, even if the Emperor himself should command it. Shut the door," she said, "Anna Comnena; and if the jealousy of the stronger sex do not allow us the masculine privileges of bolts and bars, to secure the insides of our apartments, let us avail ourselves, as quickly as may be, of such opportunities as are permitted us; and remember, Princess, that however implicit your duty to your father, it is yet more so to me, who am of the same sex with thyself, and may truly call thee, even according to the letter, blood of my blood, and bone of my bone. Be assured thy father knows not, at this moment, the feelings of a woman. Neither he nor any man alive can justly conceive the

pangs of the heart which beats under a woman's robe. These men, Anna, would tear asunder without scruple the tenderest ties of affection, the whole structure of domestic felicity, in which lie a woman's cares, her joy, her pain, her love, and her despair. Trust, therefore, to me, my daughter! and believe me, I will at once save thy father's crown and thy happiness. The conduct of thy husband has been wrong, most cruelly wrong; but, Anna, he is a man —and in calling him such, I lay to his charge, as natural frailties, thoughtless treachery, wanton infidelity, every species of folly and inconsistency, to which his race is subject. You ought not, therefore, to think of his faults, unless it be to forgive them."

"Madam," said Anna Comnena, "forgive me if I remind you that you recommend to a princess, born in the purple itself, a line of conduct which would hardly become the female who carries the pitcher for the needful supply of water to the village well. All who are around me have been taught to pay me the obeisance due to my birth, and while this Nicephorus Briennius crept on his knees to your daughter's hand, which you extended towards him, he was rather receiving the yoke of a mistress than accepting a household alliance with a wife. He has incurred his doom, without a touch even of that temptation which may be pled by lesser culprits in his condition; and if it is the will of my father that he should die, or suffer banishment, or imprisonment, for the crime he has committed, it is not the business of Anna Comnena to interfere, she being the most injured among the imperial family, who have

in so many, and such gross respects, the right to complain of his falsehood."

"Daughter," replied the Empress, "so far I agree with you, that the treason of Nicephorus towards your father and myself has been in a great degree unpardonable; nor do I easily see on what footing, save that of generosity, his life could be saved. But still you are yourself in different circumstances from me, and may, as an affectionate and fond wife, compare the intimacies of your former habits with the bloody change which is so soon to be the consequence and the conclusion of his crimes. He is possessed of that person and of those features which women most readily recall to their memory, whether alive or dead. Think what it will cost you to recollect that the rugged executioner received his last salute,—that the shapely neck had no better repose than the rough block,—that the tongue, the sound of which you used to prefer to the choicest instrument of music, is silent in the dust!"

Anna, who was not insensible to the personal graces of her husband, was much affected by this forcible appeal. "Why distress me thus, mother?" she replied in a weeping accent. "Did I not feel as acutely as you would have me to do, this moment, however awful, would be easily borne. I had but to think of him as he is, to contrast his personal qualities with those of the mind, by which they are more than overbalanced, and resign myself to his deserved fate with unresisting submission to my father's will."

"And that," said the Empress, "would be to bind

thee, by his sole fiat, to some obscure wretch, whose habits of plotting and intriguing had, by some miserable chance, given him the opportunity of becoming of importance to the Emperor, and who is, therefore, to be rewarded by the hand of Anna Comnena."

"Do not think so meanly of me, madam," said the Princess—"I know, as well as ever Grecian maiden did, how I should free myself from dishonour; and, you may trust me, you shall never blush for your daughter."

"Tell me not that," said the Empress, "since I shall blush alike for the relentless cruelty which gives up a once beloved husband to an ignominious death, and for the passion, for which I want a name, which would replace him by an obscure barbarian from the extremity of Thule, or some wretch escaped from the Blacquernal dungeons."

The Princess was astonished to perceive that her mother was acquainted with the purposes, even the most private, which her father had formed for his governance during this emergency. She was ignorant that Alexius and his royal consort, in other respects living together with a decency ever exemplary in people of their rank, had sometimes, on interesting occasions, family debates, in which the husband, provoked by the seeming unbelief of his partner, was tempted to let her guess more of his real purposes than he would have coolly imparted of his own calm choice.

The Princess was affected at the anticipation of the death of her husband, nor could this have been

reasonably supposed to be otherwise; but she was still more hurt and affronted by her mother taking it for granted that she designed upon the instant to replace the Cæsar by an uncertain, and at all events an unworthy successor. Whatever considerations had operated to make Hereward her choice, their effect was lost when the match was placed in this odious and degrading point of view; besides which is to be remembered, that women almost instinctively deny their first thoughts in favour of a suitor, and seldom willingly reveal them, unless time and circumstance concur to favour them. She called Heaven therefore passionately to witness, while she repelled the charge.

"Bear witness," she said, "Our Lady, Queen of Heaven! Bear witness, saints and martyrs all, ye blessed ones, who are, more than ourselves, the guardians of our mental purity! that I know no passion which I dare not avow, and that if Nicephorus's life depended on my entreaty to find and men, all his injurious acts towards me disregarded and despised, it should be as long as Heaven gave to those servants whom it snatched from the earth without suffering the pangs of mortality!"

"You have sworn boldly," said the Empress. "See, Anna Comnena, that you keep your word, for believe me it will be tried."

"What will be tried, mother?" said the Princess; "or what have I to do to pronounce the doom of the Cæsar, who is not subject to my power?"

"I will shew you," said the Empress, gravely; and, leading her towards a sort of wardrobe, which

formed a closet in the wall, she withdrew a curtain which hung before it, and placed before her her unfortunate husband, Nicephorus Briennius, half-attired, with his sword drawn in his hand. Looking upon him as an enemy, and conscious of some schemes with respect to him which had passed through her mind in the course of these troubles, the Princess screamed faintly, upon perceiving him so near her with a weapon in his hand.

"Be more composed," said the Empress, "or this wretched man, if discovered, falls no less a victim to thy idle fears than to thy baneful revenge."

Nicephorus at this speech seemed to have adopted his cue, for, dropping the point of his sword, and falling on his knees before the Princess, he clasped his hands to entreat for mercy.

"What hast thou to ask from me?" said his wife, naturally assured, by her husband's prostration, that the stronger force was upon her own side—"what hast thou to ask from me, that outraged gratitude, betrayed affection, the most solemn vows violated, and the fondest ties of nature torn asunder like the spider's broken web, will permit thee to put in words for very shame?"

"Do not suppose, Anna," replied the suppliant, "that I am at this eventful period of my life to play the hypocrite, for the purpose of saving the wretched remnant of a dishonoured existence. I am but desirous to part in charity with thee, to make my peace with Heaven, and to nourish the last hope of making my way, though burdened with many crimes, to the regions in which alone I

can find thy beauty, thy talents, equalled at least, if not excelled."

"You hear him, daughter?" said Irene; "his boon is for forgiveness alone; thy condition is the more godlike, since thou mayst unite the safety of his life with the pardon of his offences."

"Thou art deceived, mother," answered Anna. "It is not mine to pardon his guilt, far less to remit his punishment. You have taught me to think of myself as future ages shall know me; what will they say of me, those future ages, when I am described as the unfeeling daughter, who pardoned the intended assassin of her father, because she saw in him her own unfaithful husband?"

"See there," said the Cæsar, "is not that, most serene Empress, the very point of despair! and have I not in vain offered my life-blood to wipe out the stain of parricide and ingratitude? Have I not also vindicated myself from the most unpardonable part of the accusation, which charged me with attempting the murder of the godlike Emperor? Have I not sworn by all that is sacred to man, that my purpose went no farther than to sequestrate Alexius for a little time from the fatigues of empire, and place him where he should quietly enjoy ease and tranquillity? while, at the same time, his empire should be as implicitly regulated by himself, his sacred pleasure being transmitted through me, as in any respect, or at any period, it had ever been?"

"Erring man!" said the Princess, "hast thou

approached so near to the footstool of Alexius Comnenus, and durst thou form so false an estimate of him, as to conceive it possible that he would consent to be a mere puppet by whose intervention you might have brought his empire to submission? Know that the blood of Comnenus is not so poor; my father would have resisted the treason in arms; and by the death of thy benefactor only couldst thou have gratified the suggestions of thy criminal ambition."

"Be such your belief," said the Cæsar; "I have said enough for a life which is not and ought not to be dear to me. Call your guards, and let them take the life of the unfortunate Briennius, since it has become hateful to his once beloved Anna Comnena. Be not afraid that any resistance of mine shall render the scene of my apprehension dubious or fatal. Nicephorus Briennius is Cæsar no longer, and he thus throws at the feet of his Princess and spouse, the only poor means which he has of resisting the just doom which is therefore at her pleasure to pass."

He cast his sword before the feet of the Princess, while Irene exclaimed, weeping, or seeming to weep bitterly, "I have indeed read of such scenes! but could I ever have thought that my own daughter would have been the principal actress in one of them --could I ever have thought that her mind, admired by every one as a palace for the occupation of Apollo and the Muses, should not have had room enough for the humbler, but more amiable virtue of feminine charity and compassion, which builds itself a nest in

the bosom of the lowest village girl? Do thy gifts, accomplishments, and talents, spread hardness as well as polish over thy heart? If so, a hundred times better renounce them all, and retain in their stead those gentle and domestic virtues which are the first honours of the female heart. A woman who is pitiless, is a worse monster than one who is unsexed by any other passion."

"What would you have me do?" said Anna. "You, mother, ought to know better than I that the life of my father is hardly consistent with the existence of this bold and cruel man. O, I am sure he still meditates his purpose of conspiracy! He that could déceive a woman in the manner he has done me, will not relinquish a plan which is founded upon the death of his benefactor."

"You do me injustice, Anna," said Briennius, starting up, and imprinting a kiss upon her lips ere she was aware. "By this caress, the last that will pass between us, I swear, that if in my life I have yielded to folly, I have, notwithstanding, never been guilty of a treason of the heart towards a woman as superior to the rest of the female world in talents and accomplishments, as in personal beauty."

The Princess, much softened, shook her head, as she replied—"Ah, Nicephorus!—such were once your words! such, perhaps, were then your thoughts! But who, or what, shall now warrant to me the veracity of either?"

"Those very accomplishments, and that very beauty itself," replied Nicephorus.

"And if more is wanting," said Irene, "thy mother

will enter her security for him. Deem her not an insufficient pledge in this affair; she is thy mother, and the wife of Alexius Comnenus, interested beyond all human beings in the growth and increase of the power and dignity of her husband and her child; and one who sees on this occasion an opportunity for exercising generosity, for soldering up the breaches of the Imperial House, and reconstructing the frame of government upon a basis, which, if there be faith and gratitude in man, shall never be again exposed to hazard."

"To the reality of that faith and gratitude, then," said the Princess, "we must trust implicitly, as it is your will, mother; although even my own knowledge of the subject, both through study and experience of the world, has called me to observe the rashness of such confidence. But although we two may forgive Nicephorus's errors, the Emperor is still the person to whom the final reference must be had, both as to pardon and favour."

"Fear not Alexius," answered her mother; "he will speak determinedly and decidedly; but if he acts not in the very moment of forming the resolution, it is no more to be relied on than an icicle in time of thaw. Do thou apprise me, if thou canst, what the Emperor is at present doing, and take my word I will find means to bring him round to our opinion."

"Must I then betray secrets which my father has intrusted to me?" said the Princess; "and to one who has so lately held the character of his avowed enemy?"

"Call it not betray," said Irene, "since it is written thou shalt betray no one, least of all thy father, and the father of the empire. Yet again it is written, by the holy Luke, that men shall be betrayed, both by parents and brethren, and kinsfolk and friends, and therefore surely also by daughters; by which I only mean thou shalt discover to us thy father's secrets, so far as may enable us to save the life of thy husband. The necessity of the case excuses whatever may be otherwise considered as irregular."

"Be it so then, mother. Having yielded my consent perhaps too easily, to snatch this malefactor from my father's justice, I am sensible I must secure his safety by such means as are in my power. I left my father at the bottom of those stairs, called the Pit of Acheron, in the cell of a blind man, to whom he gave the name of Ursel."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the Empress, "thou hast named a name which has been long unspoken in the open air."

"Has the Emperor's sense of his danger from the living," said the Cæsar, "induced him to invoke the dead?—for Ursel has been no living man for the space of three years."

"It matters not," said Anna Comnena; "I tell you true. My father even now held conference with a miserable-looking prisoner, whom he so named."

"It is a danger the more," said the Cæsar; "he cannot have forgotten the zeal with which I embraced the cause of the present Emperor against his

own; and so soon as he is at liberty, he will study to avenge it. For this we must endeavour to make some provision, though it increases our difficulties.—Sit down then, my gentle, my beneficent mother; and thou, my wife, who hast preferred thy love for an unworthy husband to the suggestions of jealous passion and of headlong revenge, sit down, and let us see in what manner it may be in our power, consistently with your duty to the Emperor, to bring our broken vessel securely into port."

He employed much natural grace of manner in handing the mother and daughter to their seats; and, taking his place confidentially between them, all were soon engaged in concerting what measures should be taken for the morrow, not forgetting such as should at once have the effect of preserving the Cæsar's life, and at the same time of securing the Grecian empire against the conspiracy of which he had been the chief instigator. Briennius ventured to hint, that perhaps the best way would be to suffer the conspiracy to proceed as originally intended, pledging his own faith that the rights of Alexius should be held inviolate during the struggle; but his influence over the Empress and her daughter did not extend to obtaining so great a trust. They plainly protested against permitting him to leave the palace, or taking the least share in the confusion which to-morrow was certain to witness.

"You forget, noble ladies," said the Cæsar, "that my honour is concerned in meeting the Count of Paris."

"Pshaw! tell me not of your honour, Briennius,"

said Anna Comnena; "do I not well know, that although the honour of the western knights be a species of Moloch, a flesh-devouring, blood-quaffing demon, yet that which is the god of idolatry to the eastern warriors, though equally loud and noisy in the hall, is far less implacable in the field? Believe not that I have forgiven great injuries and insults, in order to take such false coin as *honour* in payment. Your ingenuity is but poor, if you cannot devise some excuse which will satisfy the Greeks; and in good sooth, Briennius, to this battle you go not, whether for your good or for your ill. Believe not that I will consent to your meeting either Count or Countess, whether in warlike combat or amorous parley. So you may at a word count upon remaining prisoner here until the hour appointed for such gross folly be past and over."

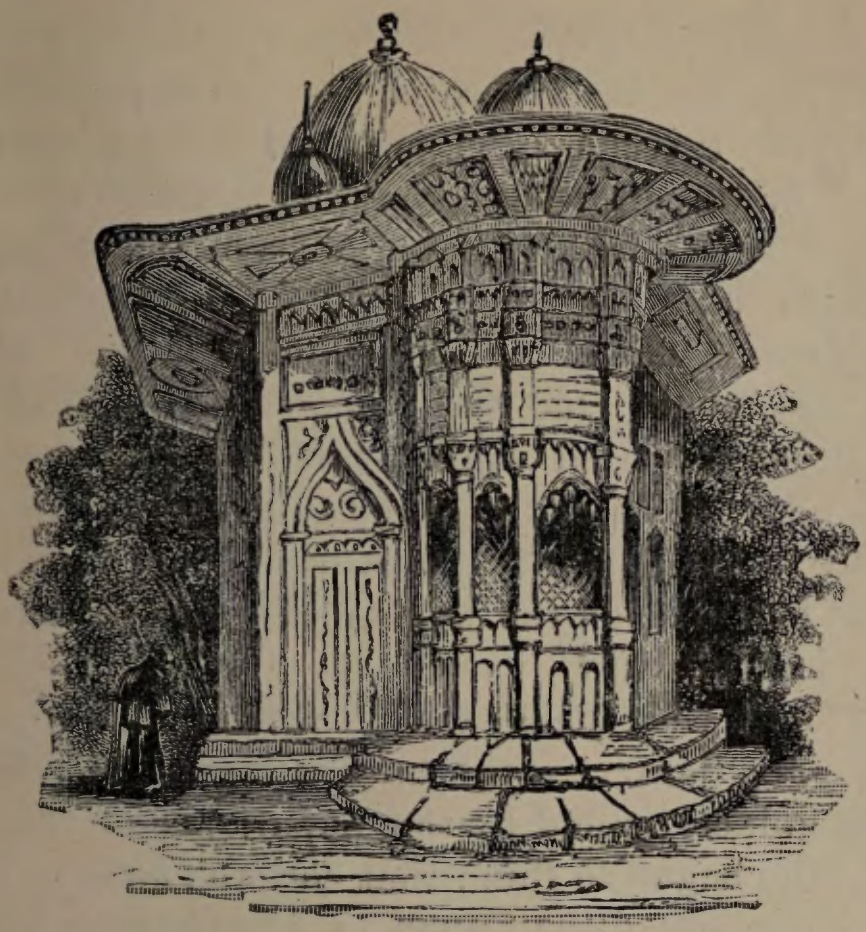
The Cæsar, perhaps, was not in his heart angry that his wife's pleasure was so bluntly and resolutely expressed against the intended combat. "If," said he, "you are determined to take my honour into your own keeping, I am here for the present your prisoner, nor have I the means of interfering with your pleasure. When once at liberty, the free exercise of my valour and my lance is once more my own."

"Be it so, Sir Paladin," said the Princess, very composedly. "I have good hope that neither of them will involve you with any of yon dare-devils of Paris, whether male or female, and that we will regulate the pitch to which your courage soars, by the estimation of Greek philosophy, and the judg-

ment of our blessed Lady of Mercy, not her of the Broken Lances."

At this moment an authoritative knock at the door alarmed the consultation of the Cæsar and the ladies.

STATUE OF SIR WALTER, BY STEEL : EDINBURGH.



FOUNTAIN AT GALATA.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

Physician.—Be comforted, good madam ; the great rage,
You see, is cured in him : and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
Desire him to go in : trouble him no more,
Till further settling.

KING LEAR.

WE left the Emperor Alexius Comnenus at the bottom of a subterranean vault, with a lamp expiring, and having charge of a prisoner, who seemed himself nearly reduced to the same extremity. For the first two or three moments, he listened after his daugh-

ter's retiring footsteps. He grew impatient, and began to long for her return before it was possible she could have traversed the path betwixt him and the summit of these gloomy stairs. A minute or two he endured with patience the absence of the assistance which he had sent her to summon; but strange suspicions began to cross his imagination. Could it be possible? Had she changed her purpose on account of the hard words which he had used towards her? Had she resolved to leave her father to his fate in his hour of utmost need? and was he to rely no longer upon the assistance which he had implored her to send?

The short time which the Princess trifled away in a sort of gallantry with the Varangian Hereward, was magnified tenfold by the impatience of the Emperor, who began to think that she was gone to fetch the accomplices of the Cæsar to assault their prince in his defenceless condition, and carry into effect their half-disconcerted conspiracy.

After a considerable time, filled up with this feeling of agonizing uncertainty, he began at length, more composedly, to recollect the little chance there was that the Princess would, even for her own sake, resentful as she was in the highest degree of her husband's ill behaviour, join her resources to his, to the destruction of one who had so generally shewed himself an indulgent and affectionate father. When he had adopted this better mood, a step was heard upon the staircase, and after a long and unequal descent, Hereward, in his heavy armour, at length coolly arrived at the bottom of the steps. Behind

him, panting and trembling, partly with cold and partly with terror, came Douban, the slave well skilled in medicine.

"Welcome, good Edward! Welcome, Douban!" he said, "whose medical skill is sufficiently able to counterbalance the weight of years which hang upon him."

"Your Highness is gracious," said Douban—but what he would have further said was cut off by a violent fit of coughing, the consequence of his age, of his feeble habit, of the damps of the dungeon, and the rugged exercise of descending the long and difficult staircase.

"Thou art unaccustomed to visit thy patients in so rough an abode," said Alexius; "and, nevertheless, to the damps of these dreary regions state necessity obliges us to confine many, who are no less our beloved subjects in reality than they are in title."

The medical man continued his cough, perhaps as an apology for not giving that answer of assent, with which his conscience did not easily permit him to reply to an observation, which, though stated by one who should know the fact, seemed not to be in itself altogether likely.

"Yes, my Douban," said the Emperor, "in this strong case of steel and adamant have we found it necessary to enclose the redoubted Ursel, whose fame is spread through the whole world, both for military skill, political wisdom, personal bravery, and other noble gifts, which we have been obliged to obscure for a time, in order that we might, at the fittest conjuncture, which is now arrived, restore them

to the world in their full lustre. Feel his pulse, therefore, Douban—consider him as one who hath suffered severe confinement, with all its privations, and is about to be suddenly restored to the full enjoyment of life, and whatever renders life valuable."

"I will do my best," said Douban; "but your Majesty must consider, that we work upon a frail and exhausted subject, whose health seems already well-nigh gone, and may perhaps vanish in an instant—like this pale and trembling light, whose precarious condition the life breath of this unfortunate patient seems closely to resemble."

"Desire, therefore, good Douban, one or two of the mutes who serve in the interior, and who have repeatedly been thy assistants in such cases—or stay—Edward, thy motions will be more speedy; do thou go for the mutes—make them bring some kind of litter to transport the patient; and, Douban, do thou superintend the whole. Transport him instantly to a suitable apartment, only taking care that it be secret, and let him enjoy the comforts of the bath, and whatever else may tend to restore his feeble animation—keeping in mind, that he must, if possible, appear to-morrow in the field."

"That will be hard," said Douban, "after having been, it would appear, subjected to such fare and such usage as his fluctuating pulse intimates but too plainly."

"'Twas a mistake of the dungeon-keeper, the inhuman villain, who should not go without his reward," continued the Emperor, "had not Heaven already bestowed it by the strange means of a syl-

van man, or native of the woods, who yesterday put to death the jailer who meditated the death of his prisoner—Yes, my dear Douban, a private sentinel of our guards called the Immortal, had well-nigh annihilated this flower of our trust, whom for a time we were compelled to immure in secret. Then, indeed, a rude hammer had dashed to pieces an unparalleled brilliant, but the fates have arrested such a misfortune."

The assistance having arrived, the physician, who seemed more accustomed to act than to speak, directed a bath to be prepared with medicated herbs, and gave it as his opinion, that the patient should not be disturbed till to-morrow's sun was high in the heavens. Ursel accordingly was assisted to the bath, which was employed according to the directions of the physician; but without affording any material symptoms of recovery. From thence he was transferred to a cheerful bedchamber, opening by an ample window to one of the terraces of the palace, which commanded an extensive prospect. These operations were performed upon a frame so extremely stupefied by previous suffering, so dead to the usual sensations of existence, that it was not till the sensibility should be gradually restored by friction of the stiffened limbs, and other means, that the leech hoped the mists of the intellect should at length begin to clear away.

Douban readily undertook to obey the commands of the Emperor, and remained by the bed of the patient until the dawn of morning, ready to support nature as far as the skill of leechcraft admitted.

ANCIENT SUBTERRANEAN BUILDING: CONSTANTINOPLE.

From the mutes, much more accustomed to be the executioners of the Emperor's displeasure than of his humanity, Douban selected one man of milder mood, and by Alexius's order, made him understand, that the task in which he was engaged was to be kept most strictly secret, while the hardened slave was astonished to find that the attentions paid to the sick were to be rendered with yet more mystery than the bloody offices of death and torture.

The passive patient received the various acts of attention which were rendered to him in silence; and if not totally without consciousness, at least without a distinct comprehension of their object. After the soothing operation of the bath, and the voluptuous exchange of the rude and musty pile of straw, on which he had stretched himself for years, for a couch of the softest down, Ursel was presented with a sedative draught, slightly tinctured with an opiate. The balmy restorer of nature came thus invoked, and the captive sunk into a delicious slumber long unknown to him, and which seemed to occupy equally his mental faculties and his bodily frame, while the features were released from their rigid tenor, and the posture of the limbs, no longer disturbed by fits of cramp, and sudden and agonizing twists and throes, seemed changed for a placid state of the most perfect ease and tranquillity.

The morn was already colouring the horizon, and the freshness of the breeze of dawn had insinuated itself into the lofty halls of the palace of the Blacquernal, when a gentle tap at the door of the chamber awakened Douban, who, undisturbed from the

calm state of his patient, had indulged himself in a brief repose. The door opened, and a figure appeared, disguised in the robes worn by an officer of the palace, and concealed, beneath an artificial beard of great size, and of a white colour, the features of the Emperor himself. "Douban," said Alexius, "how fares it with thy patient, whose safety is this day of such consequence to the Grecian state?"

"Well, my lord," replied the physician, "excellently well; and if he is not now disturbed, I will wager whatever skill I possess, that nature, assisted by the art of the physician, will triumph over the damps and the unwholesome air of the impure dungeon. Only be prudent, my lord, and let not an untimely haste bring this Ursel forward into the contest ere he has arranged the disturbed current of his ideas, and recovered, in some degree, the spring of his mind, and the powers of his body."

"I will rule my impatience," said the Emperor, "or rather, Douban, I will be ruled by thee. Thinkest thou he is awake?"

"I am inclined to think so," said the leech, "but he opens not his eyes, and seems to me as if he absolutely resisted the natural impulse to rouse himself and look around him."

"Speak to him," said the Emperor, "and let us know what is passing in his mind."

"It is at some risk," replied the physician, "but you shall be obeyed.—Ursel," he said, approaching the bed of his blind patient, and then, in a louder tone, he repeated again, "Ursel! Ursel!"

"Peace—Hush!" muttered the patient; "disturb not the blest in their ecstasy—nor again recall the most miserable of mortals to finish the draught of bitterness which his fate had compelled him to commence."

"Again, again," said the Emperor, aside to Douban, "try him yet again; it is of importance for me to know in what degree he possesses his senses, or in what measure they have disappeared from him."

"I would not, however," said the physician, "be the rash and guilty person, who, by an ill-timed urgency, should produce a total alienation of mind and plunge him back either into absolute lunacy, or produce a stupor, in which he might remain for a long period."

"Surely not," replied the Emperor; "my commands are those of one Christian to another, nor do I wish them farther obeyed than as they are consistent with the laws of God and man."

He paused for a moment after this declaration, and yet but few minutes had elapsed ere he again urged the leech to pursue the interrogation of his patient. "If you hold me not competent," said Douban, somewhat vain of the trust necessarily reposed in him, "to judge of the treatment of my patient, your Imperial Highness must take the risk and the trouble upon yourself."

"Marry, I shall," said the Emperor, "for the scruples of leeches are not to be indulged, when the fate of kingdoms and the lives of monarchs are placed against them in the scales.—Rouse thee, my noble Ursel! hear a voice, with which thy ears were once

well acquainted, welcome thee back to glory and command! Look around thee, and see how the world smiles to welcome thee back from imprisonment to empire!"

"Cunning fiend!" said Ursel, "who usest the most wily baits in order to augment the misery of the wretched! Know, tempter, that I am conscious of the whole trick of the soothing images of last night —thy baths—thy beds—and thy bowers of bliss.— But sooner shalt thou be able to bring a smile upon the cheek of Saint Anthony the Eremite, than induce me to curl mine after the fashion of earthly voluptuaries."

"Try it, foolish man," insisted the Emperor, "and trust to the evidence of thy senses for the reality of the pleasures by which thou art now surrounded; or, if thou art obstinate in thy lack of faith, tarry as thou art for a single moment, and I will bring with me a being so unparalleled in her loveliness, that a single glance of her were worth the restoration of thine eyes, were it only to look upon her for a moment." So saying, he left the apartment.

"Traitor," said Ursel, "and deceiver of old, bring no one hither! and strive not, by shadowy and ideal forms of beauty, to increase the delusion that gilds my prison-house for a moment, in order, doubtless, to destroy totally the spark of reason, and then exchange this earthly hell for a dungeon in the infernal regions themselves."

"His mind is somewhat shattered," mused the physician, "which is often the consequence of a long solitary confinement. I marvel much," was his far-

ther thought, "if the Emperor can shape out any rational service which this man can render him, after being so long immured in so horrible a dungeon.—Thou thinkest, then," continued he, addressing the patient, "that the seeming release of last night, with its baths and refreshments, was only a delusive dream, without any reality?"

"Ay—what else?" answered Ursel.

"And that the arousing thyself, as we desire thee to do, would be but a resigning to a vain temptation, in order to wake to more unhappiness than formerly?"

"Even so," returned the patient.

"What, then, are thy thoughts of the Emperor by whose command thou sufferest so severe a restraint?"

Perhaps Douban wished he had forborne this question, for, in the very moment when he put it, the door of the chamber opened, and the Emperor entered, with his daughter hanging upon his arm, dressed with simplicity, yet with becoming splendour. She had found time, it seems, to change her dress for a white robe, which resembled a kind of mourning, the chief ornament of which was a diamond chaplet, of inestimable value, which surrounded and bound the long sable tresses, that reached from her head to her waist. Terrified almost to death, she had been surprised by her father in the company of her husband the Cæsar, and her mother; and the same thundering mandate had at once ordered Briennius, in the character of a more than suspected traitor, under the custody of a strong guard of Varangians,

and commanded her to attend her father to the bedchamber of Ursel, in which she now stood; resolved, however, that she would stick by the sinking fortunes of her husband, even in the last extremity, yet no less determined that she would not rely upon her own entreaties or remonstrances, until she should see whether her father's interference was likely to reassume a resolved and positive character. Hastily as the plans of Alexius had been formed, and hastily as they had been disconcerted by accident, their remained no slight chance that he might be forced to come round to the purpose on which his wife and daughter had fixed their heart, the forgiveness, namely, of the guilty Nicephorus Briennius. To his astonishment, and not perhaps greatly to his satisfaction, he heard the patient deeply engaged with the physician in canvassing his own character.

"Think not," said Ursel in reply to him, "that though I am immured in this dungeon, and treated as something worse than an outcast of humanity—and although I am, moreover, deprived of my eyesight, the dearest gift of Heaven—think not, I say, though I suffer all this by the cruel will of Alexius Comnenus, that therefore I hold him to be mine enemy; on the contrary, it is by his means that the blinded and miserable prisoner has been taught to seek a liberty far more unconstrained than this poor earth can afford, and a vision far more clear than any Mount Pisgah on this wretched side of the grave can give us: Shall I therefore account the Emperor among mine enemies? He who has taught me the vanity of earthly things—the nothingness of earthly

enjoyments—and the pure hope of a better world, as a certain exchange for the misery of the present? No!"

The Emperor had stood somewhat disconcerted at the beginning of this speech, but hearing it so very unexpectedly terminate, as he was willing to suppose, much in his own favour, he threw himself into an attitude which was partly that of a modest person listening to his own praises, and partly that of a man highly struck with the commendations heaped upon him by a generous adversary.

"My friend," he said aloud, "how truly do you read my purpose, when you suppose that the knowledge which men of your disposition can extract from evil, was all the experience which I wished you to derive from a captivity protracted by adverse circumstances, far, very far, beyond my wishes! Let me embrace the generous man who knows so well how to construe the purpose of a perplexed, but still faithful friend."

The patient raised himself in his bed.

"Hold there!" he said, "methinks my faculties begin to collect themselves. Yes," he muttered, "that is the treacherous voice which first bid me welcome as a friend, and then commanded fiercely that I should be deprived of the sight of my eyes! —Increase thy rigour if thou wilt, Comnenus—add, if thou canst, to the torture of my confinement—but since I cannot see thy hypocritical and inhuman features, spare me, in mercy, the sound of a voice, more distressing to mine ear than toads, than serpents,—than whatever nature has most offensive and disgusting!"

This speech was delivered with so much energy, that it was in vain that the Emperor strove to interrupt its tenor; although he himself, as well as Douban and his daughter, heard a great deal more of the language of unadorned and natural passion than he had counted upon.

"Raise thy head, rash man," he said, "and charm thy tongue, ere it proceed in a strain which may cost thee dear. Look at me, and see if I have not reserved a reward capable of atoning for all the evil which thy folly may charge to my account."

Hitherto the prisoner had remained with his eyes obstinately shut, regarding the imperfect recollection he had of sights which had been before his eyes the foregoing evening, as the mere suggestion of a deluded imagination, if not actually presented by some seducing spirit. But now when his eyes fairly encountered the stately figure of the Emperor, and the graceful form of his lovely daughter, painted in the tender rays of the morning dawn, he ejaculated faintly, "I see!—I see!"

And with that ejaculation fell back on the pillow in a swoon, which instantly found employment for Doubin and his restoratives.

"A most wonderful cure indeed!" exclaimed the physician; "and the height of my wishes would be to possess such another miraculous restorative."

"Fool!" said the Emperor; "canst thou not conceive that what has never been taken away is restored with little difficulty? He was made," he said, lowering his voice, "to undergo a painful operation, which led him to believe that the organs of

sight were destroyed; and as light scarcely ever visited him, and when it did, only in doubtful and almost invisible glimmerings, the prevailing darkness, both physical and mental, that surrounded him, prevented him from being sensible of the existence of that precious faculty, of which he imagined himself bereft. Perhaps thou wilt ask my reason for inflicting upon him so strange a deception?—Simply it was, that being by it conceived incapable of reigning, his memory might pass out of the minds of the public, while, at the same time, I reserved his eyesight, that in case occasion should call, it might be in my power once more to liberate him from his dungeon, and employ, as I now propose to do, his courage and talents in the service of the empire, to counterbalance those of other conspirators."

"And can your Imperial Highness," said Douban, "hope that you have acquired this man's duty and affection by the conduct you have observed to him?"

"I cannot tell," answered the Emperor; "that must be as futurity shall determine. All I know is, that it is no fault of mine, if Ursel does not reckon freedom and a long course of empire—perhaps sanctioned by an alliance with our own blood—and the continued enjoyment of the precious organs of eyesight, of which a less scrupulous man would have deprived him, against a maimed and darkened existence."

"Since such is your Highness's opinion and resolution," said Douban, "it is for me to aid, and not to counteract it. Permit me, therefore, to pray your Highness and the Princess to withdraw, that I may

use such remedies as may confirm a mind which has been so strangely shaken, and restore to him fully the use of those eyes, of which he has been so long deprived."

"I am content, Douban," said the Emperor; "but take notice, Ursel is not totally at liberty until he has expressed the resolution to become actually mine. It may behove both him and thee to know, that although there is no purpose of remitting him to the dungeons of the Blacquernal palace, yet if he, or any on his part, should aspire to head a party in these feverish times,—by the honour of a gentleman, to swear a Frankish oath, he shall find that he is not out of the reach of the battle-axes of my Varangians. I trust to thee to communicate this fact, which concerns alike him and all who have interest in his fortunes.—Come, daughter, we will withdraw, and leave the leech with his patient.—Take notice, Douban, it is of importance that you acquaint me the very first moment when the patient can hold rational communication with me."

Alexius and his accomplished daughter departed accordingly.

THE DARDANELLES.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Bears yet a precious jewel in its head.

As You Like It.

From a terraced roof of the Blacquernal palace, accessible by a sash-door, which opened from the bedchamber of Ursel, there was commanded one of the most lovely and striking views which the romantic neighbourhood of Constantinople afforded.

After suffering him to repose and rest his agitated faculties, it was to this place that the physician led his patient; for when somewhat composed, he had of himself requested to be permitted to verify the

truth of his restored eyesight, by looking out once more upon the majestic face of nature.

On the one hand, the scene which he beheld was a masterpiece of human art. The proud city ornamented with stately buildings, as became the capital of the world, shewed a succession of glittering spires and orders of architecture, some of them chaste and simple, like those the capitals of which were borrowed from baskets-full of acanthus; some deriving the fluting of their shafts from the props made originally to support the lances of the earlier Greeks — forms simple, yet more graceful in their simplicity, than any which human ingenuity has been able since to invent. With the most splendid specimens which ancient art could afford of those strictly classical models were associated those of a later age, where more modern taste had endeavoured at improvement, and, by mixing the various orders, had produced such as were either composite, or totally out of rule. The size of the buildings in which they were displayed, however, procured them respect; nor could even the most perfect judge of architecture avoid being struck by the grandeur of their extent and effect, although hurt by the incorrectness of the taste in which they were executed. Arches of triumph, towers, obelisks, and spires, designed for various purposes, rose up into the air in confused magnificence; while the lower view was filled by the streets of the city, the domestic habitations forming long narrow alleys, on either side of which the houses arose to various and unequal heights, but, being generally finished with terraced

coverings, thick set with plants and flowers, and fountains, had, when seen from an eminence, a more noble and interesting aspect than is ever afforded by the sloping and uniform roofs of streets in the capitals of the north of Europe.

It has taken us some time to give, in words, the idea which was at a single glance conveyed to Ursel, and affected him at first with great pain. His eyeballs had been long strangers to that daily exercise, which teaches us the habit of correcting the scenes as they appear to our sight, by the knowledge which we derive from the use of our other senses. His idea of distance was so confused, that it seemed as if all the spires, turrets, and minarets which he beheld, were crowded forward upon his eyeballs, and almost touching them. With a shriek of horror, Ursel turned himself to the further side, and cast his eyes upon a different scene. Here also he saw towers, steeples, and turrets, but they were those of the churches and public buildings beneath his feet, reflected from the dazzling piece of water which formed the harbour of Constantinople, and which, from the abundance of wealth which it transported to the city, was well termed the Golden Horn. In one place, this superb basin was lined with quays, where stately dromonds and argosies unloaded their wealth, while, by the shore of the haven, galleys, feluccas, and other small craft, idly flapped the singularly-shaped and snow-white pinions which served them for sails. In other places the Golden Horn lay shrouded in a verdant mantle of trees, where the private gardens of wealthy or dis-

tinguished individuals, or places of public recreation, shot down upon and were bounded by the glassy waters.

On the Bosphorus, which might be seen in the distance, the little fleet of Tancred was lying in the same station they had gained during the night, which was fitted to command the opposite landing; this their general had preferred to a midnight descent upon Constantinople, not knowing whether, so coming, they might be received as friends or enemies. This delay, however, had given the Greeks an opportunity, either by the orders of Alexius, or the equally powerful mandates of some of the conspirators, to tow six ships of war, full of armed men, and provided with the maritime offensive weapons peculiar to the Greeks at that period, which they had moored so as exactly to cover the place where the troops of Tancred must necessarily land.

This preparation gave some surprise to the valiant Tancred, who did not know that such vessels had arrived in the harbour from Lemnos on the preceding night. The undaunted courage of that prince was, however, in no respect to be shaken by the degree of unexpected danger with which his adventure now appeared to be attended.

This splendid view, from the description of which we have in some degree digressed, was seen by the physician and Ursel from a terrace, the loftiest almost on the palace of the Blacquernal. To the city-ward, it was bounded by a solid wall, of considerable height, giving a resting-place for the roof of a lower building which, sloping outward, broke

to the view the vast height unobscured otherwise save by a high and massy balustrade, composed of bronze, which, to the haven-ward, sunk sheer down upon an uninterrupted precipice.

No sooner, therefore, had Ursel turned his eyes that way, than, though placed far from the brink of the terrace, he exclaimed, with a shriek, "Save me—save me! if you are not indeed the destined executors of the Emperor's will."

"We are indeed such," said Douban, "to save, and if possible to bring you to complete recovery; but by no means to do you injury, or to suffer it to be offered by others."

"Guard me then from myself," said Ursel, "and save me from the reeling and insane desire which I feel to plunge myself into the abyss, to the edge of which you have guided me."

"Such a giddy and dangerous temptation is," said the physician, "common to those who have not for a long time looked down from precipitous heights, and are suddenly brought to them. Nature, however bounteous, hath not provided for the cessation of our faculties for years, and for their sudden resumption in full strength and vigour. An interval, longer or shorter, must needs intervene. Can you not believe this terrace a safe station while you have my support and that of this faithful slave?"

"Certainly," said Ursel; "but permit me to turn my face towards this stone wall, for I cannot bear to look at the flimsy piece of wire, which is the only battlement of defence that interposes betwixt me and the precipice." He spoke of the bronze balustrade,

URSEL AND DOUBAN ON THE TERRACE.

six feet high, and massive in proportion. Thus saying, and holding fast by the physician's arm, Ursel, though himself a younger and more able man, trembled, and moved his feet as slowly as if made of lead, until he reached the sashed door, where stood a kind of balcony-seat, in which he placed himself.—"Here," he said, "will I remain."

"And here," said Douban, "will I make the communication of the Emperor, which it is necessary you should be prepared to reply to. It places you, you will observe, at your own disposal for liberty or captivity, but it conditions for your resigning that sweet but sinful morsel termed revenge, which, I must not conceal from you, chance appears willing to put into your hand. You know the degree of rivalry in which you have been held by the Emperor, and you know the measure of evil you have sustained at his hand. The question is, Can you forgive what has taken place?"

"Let me wrap my head round with my mantle," said Ursel, "to dispel this dizziness which still oppresses my poor brain, and as soon as the power of recollection is granted me, you shall know my sentiments."

He sunk upon the seat, muffled in the way which he described, and after a few minutes' reflection, with a trepidation which argued the patient still to be under the nervous feeling of extreme horror mixed with terror, he addressed Douban thus: "The operation of wrong and cruelty, in the moment when they are first inflicted, excites, of course, the utmost resentment of the sufferer: nor is there, perhaps, a

passion which lives so long in his bosom as the natural desire of revenge. If, then, during the first month, when I lay stretched upon my bed of want and misery, you had offered me an opportunity of revenge upon my cruel oppressor, the remnant of miserable life which remained to me should have been willingly bestowed to purchase it. But a suffering of weeks, or even months, must not be compared in effect with that of years. For a short space of endurance, the body, as well as the mind, retains that vigorous habit which holds the prisoner still connected with life, and teaches him to thrill at the long-forgotten chain of hopes, of wishes, of disappointments, and mortifications, which affected his former existence. But the wounds become callous as they harden, and other and better feelings occupy their place, while they gradually die away in forgetfulness. The enjoyments, the amusements of this world, occupy no part of his time upon whom the gates of despair have once closed. I tell thee, my kind physician, that for a season, in an insane attempt to effect my liberty, I cut through a large portion of the living rock. But Heaven cured me of so foolish an idea; and if I did not actually come to love Alexius Comnenus—for how could that have been a possible effect in any rational state of my intellects?—yet as I became convinced of my own crimes, sins, and follies, the more and more I was also persuaded that Alexius was but the agent through whom Heaven exercised a dearly-purchased right of punishing me for my manifold offences and transgressions; and that it was not therefore upon

the Emperor that my resentment ought to visit itself. And I can now say to thee, that, so far as a man who has undergone so dreadful a change can be supposed to know his own mind, I feel no desire either to rival Alexius in a race for empire, or to avail myself of any of the various proffers which he proposes to me as the price of withdrawing my claim. Let him keep unpurchased the crown, for which he has paid, in my opinion, a price which it is not worth."

"This is extraordinary stoicism, noble Ursel," answered the physician Douban. "Am I then to understand that you reject the fair offers of Alexius, and desire, instead of all which he is willing—nay, anxious to bestow—to be committed safely back to thy old blinded dungeon in the Blacquernal, that you may continue at ease those pietistic meditations which have already conducted thee to so extravagant a conclusion?"

"Physician," said Ursel, while a shuddering fit that affected his whole body testified his alarm at the alternative proposed—"one would imagine thine own profession might have taught thee, that no mere mortal man, unless predestined to be a glorified saint, could ever prefer darkness to the light of day; blindness itself to the enjoyment of the power of sight; the pangs of starving to competent sustenance, or the damps of a dungeon to the free air of God's creation. No!—it may be virtue to do so, but to such a pitch mine does not soar. All I require of the Emperor for standing by him with all the power my name can give him at this crisis is, that he will

provide for my reception as a monk in some of those pleasant and well-endowed seminaries of piety, to which his devotion, or his fears, have given rise. Let me not be again the object of his suspicion, the operation of which is more dreadful than that of being the object of his hate. Forgotten by power, as I have myself lost the remembrance of those that wielded it, let me find my way to the grave, unnoticed, unconstrained, at liberty, in possession of my dim and disused organs of sight, and, above all, at peace."

"If such be thy serious and earnest wish, noble Ursel," said the physician, "I myself have no hesitation to warrant to thee the full accomplishment of thy religious and moderate desires. But, bethink thee, thou art once more an inhabitant of the court, in which thou mayst obtain what thou wilt to-day; while to-morrow, shouldst thou regret thy indifference, it may be thy utmost entreaty will not suffice to gain for thee the slightest extension of thy present conditions."

"Be it so," said Ursel; "I will then stipulate for another condition, which indeed has only reference to this day. I will solicit his Imperial Majesty, with all humility, to spare me the pain of a personal treaty between himself and me, and that he will be satisfied with the solemn assurance that I am most willing to do in his favour all that he is desirous of dictating; while, on the other hand, I desire only the execution of those moderate conditions of my future aliment which I have already told thee at length."

"But wherefore," said Douban, "shouldst thou be afraid of announcing to the Emperor thy disposition to an agreement, which cannot be esteemed otherwise than extremely moderate on thy part? Indeed, I fear the Emperor will insist on a brief personal conference."

"I am not ashamed," said Ursel, "to confess the truth. It is true, that I have, or think I have, renounced what the Scripture calls the pride of life; but the old Adam still lives within us, and maintains against the better part of our nature an inextinguishable quarrel, easy to be aroused from its slumber, but as difficult to be again couched in peace. While last night I but half understood that mine enemy was in my presence, and while my faculties performed but half their duty in recalling his deceitful and hated accents, did not my heart throb in my bosom with all the agitation of a taken bird, and shall I again have to enter into a personal treaty with the man who, be his general conduct what it may, has been the constant and unprovoked cause of my unequalled misery? Douban, no!—to listen to his voice again, were to hear an alarm sounded to every violent and vindictive passion of my heart; and though, may Heaven so help me, as my intentions towards him are upright, yet it is impossible for me to listen to his professions with a chance of safety either to him or to myself."

"If you be so minded," replied Douban, "I shall only repeat to him your stipulation, and you must swear to him that you will strictly observe it. Without this being done, it must be difficult, or perhaps

impossible, to settle the league of which both are desirous."

"Amen!" said Ursel; "and as I am pure in my purpose, and resolved to keep it to the uttermost, so may Heaven guard me from the influence of precipitate revenge, ancient grudge, or new quarrel!"

An authoritative knock at the door of the sleeping chamber was now heard, and Ursel, relieved by more powerful feelings from the giddiness of which he had complained, walked firmly into the bedroom, and seating himself, waited with averted eyes the entrance of the person who demanded admittance, and who proved to be no other than Alexius Comnenus.

The Emperor appeared at the door in a warlike dress, suited for the decoration of a prince who was to witness a combat in the lists fought out before him.

"Sage Douban," he said, "has our esteemed prisoner, Ursel, made his choice between our peace and enmity?"

"He hath, my lord," replied the physician, "embraced the lot of that happy portion of mankind, whose hearts and lives are devoted to the service of your Majesty's government."

"He will then this day," continued the Emperor, "render me the office of putting down all those who may pretend to abet insurrection in his name, and under pretext of his wrongs?"

"He will, my lord," replied the physician, "act to the fullest the part which you require."

"And in what way," said the Emperor, adopting his most gracious tone of voice, "would our faithful Ursel desire that services like these, rendered in the

hour of extreme need, should be acknowledged by the Emperor?"

"Simply," answered Douban, "by saying nothing upon the subject. He desires only that all jealousies between you and him may be henceforth forgotten, and that he may be admitted into one of your Highness's monastic institutions, with leave to dedicate the rest of his life to the worship of Heaven and its saints."

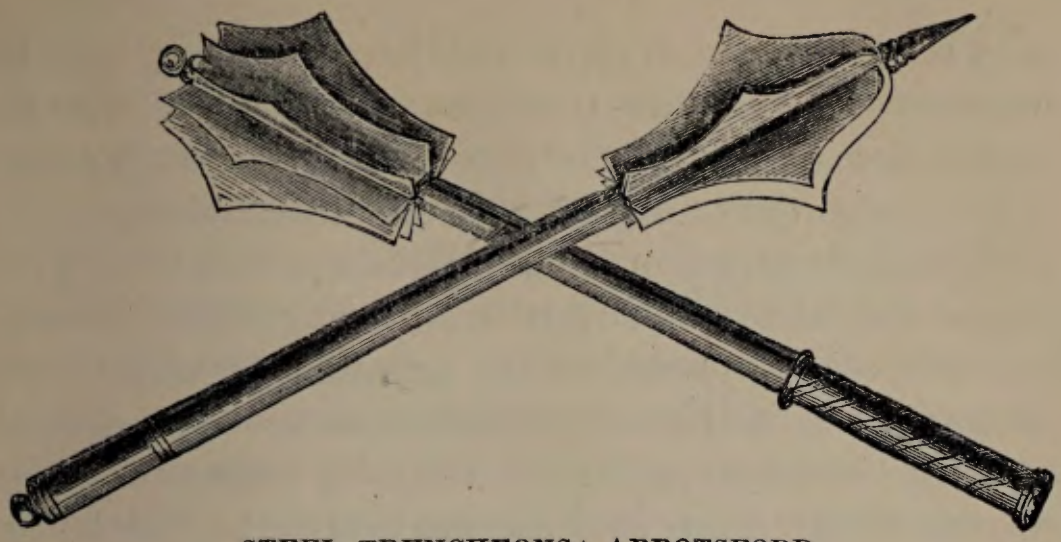
"Hath he persuaded thee of this, Douban?"—said the Emperor, in a low and altered voice. "By Heaven! when I consider from what prison he was brought, and in what guise he inhabited it, I cannot believe in this gall-less disposition. He must at least speak to me himself, ere I can believe, in some degree, the transformation of the fiery Ursel into a being so little capable of feeling the ordinary impulses of mankind."

"Hear me, Alexius Comnenus," said the prisoner; "and so may thine own prayers to Heaven find access and acceptation, as thou believest the words which I speak to thee in simplicity of heart. If thine empire of Greece were made of coined gold, it would hold out no bait for my acceptance; nor, I thank Heaven, have even the injuries I have experienced at thy hand, cruel and extensive as they have been, impressed upon me the slightest desire of requiting treachery with treachery. Think of me as thou wilt, so thou seek'st not again to exchange words with me; and believe me, that when thou hast put me under the most rigid of thy ecclesiastical foundations, the discipline, the fare, and the vigils,

will be far superior to the existence falling to the share of those whom the King delights to honour, and who therefore must afford the King their society whenever they are summoned to do so."

"It is hardly for me," said the physician, "to interpose in so high a matter; yet, as trusted both by the noble Ursel, and by his Highness the Emperor, I have made a brief abstract of these short conditions to be kept by the high parties towards each other, *sub crimine falsi.*"

The Emperor protracted the intercourse with Ursel, until he more fully explained to him the occasion which he should have that very day for his services. When they parted, Alexius, with a great show of affection, embraced his late prisoner, while it required all the self-command and stoicism of Ursel to avoid expressing in plain terms the extent to which he abhorred the person who thus caressed him.



STEEL TRUNCHEONS: ABBOTSFORD.

CHAPTER THE TWENTY-NINTH.

* * * O, Conspiracy!
Sham'st thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,
When evils are most free? O, then, by day,
Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
To mask thy monstrous visage? Seek none, Conspiracy;
Hide it in smiles and affability:
For if thou path, thy native semblance on,
Not Erebus itself were dim enough
To hide thee from prevention.

JULIUS CÆSAR.

THE important morning at last arrived, on which, by the Imperial proclamation, the combat between the Cæsar and Robert Count of Paris was appointed to take place. This was a circumstance in a great measure foreign to the Grecian manners, and to which, therefore, the people annexed different ideas from those which were associated with the same solemn decision of God, as the Latins called it, by the western nations. The consequence was a vague, but excessive agitation among the people, who con-

nected the extraordinary strife which they were to witness with the various causes which had been whispered abroad as likely to give occasion to some general insurrection of a great and terrible nature.

By the Imperial order, regular lists had been prepared for the combat, with opposite gates, or entrances, as was usual, for the admittance of the two champions; and it was understood that the appeal was to be made to the Divinity by each, according to the forms prescribed by the Church of which the combatants were respectively members. The situation of these lists was on the side of the shore adjoining on the west to the continent. At no great distance, the walls of the city were seen, of various architecture, composed of lime and of stone, and furnished with no less than four-and-twenty gates, or posterns, five of which regarded the land, and nineteen the water. All this formed a beautiful prospect, much of which is still visible. The town itself is about nineteen miles in circumference; and as it is on all sides surrounded with lofty cypresses, its general appearance is that of a city arising out of a stately wood of these magnificent trees, partly shrouding the pinnacles, obelisks, and minarets, which then marked the site of many noble Christian temples; but now, generally speaking, intimate the position of as many Mahomedan mosques.

These lists, for the convenience of spectators, were surrounded on all sides by long rows of seats, sloping downwards. In the middle of these seats, and exactly opposite the centre of the lists, was a high throne, erected for the Emperor himself; and which

was separated from the more vulgar galleries by a circuit of wooden barricades, which an experienced eye could perceive, might, in case of need, be made serviceable for purposes of defence.

The lists were sixty yards in length, by perhaps about forty in breadth, and these afforded ample space for the exercise of the combat, both on horseback and on foot. Numerous bands of the Greek citizens began, with the very break of day, to issue from the gates and posterns of the city, to examine and wonder at the construction of the lists, pass their criticisms upon the purposes of the peculiar parts of the fabric, and occupy places, to secure them for the spectacle. Shortly after arrived a large band of those soldiers who were called the Roman Immortals. These entered without ceremony, and placed themselves on either hand of the wooden barricade which fenced the Emperor's seat. Some of them took even a greater liberty; for, affecting to be pressed against the boundary, there were individuals who approached the partition itself, and seemed to meditate climbing over it, and placing themselves on the same side with the Emperor. Some old domestic slaves of the household now shewed themselves, as if for the purpose of preserving this sacred circle for Alexius and his court; and, in proportion as the Immortals began to shew themselves encroaching and turbulent, the strength of the defenders of the prohibited precincts seemed gradually to increase.

There was, though scarcely to be observed, besides the grand access to the Imperial seat from without, another opening also from the outside, secured by a

very strong door, by which different persons received admission beneath the seats destined for the Imperial party. These persons, by their length of limb, breadth of shoulders, by the fur of their cloaks, and especially by the redoubted battle-axes which all of them bore, appeared to be Varangians; but, although neither dressed in their usual habit of pomp, nor in their more effectual garb of war, still, when narrowly examined, they might be seen to possess their usual offensive weapons. These men, entering in separate and straggling parties, might be observed to join the slaves of the interior of the palace in opposing the intrusion of the Immortals upon the seat of the Emperor, and the benches around. Two or three Immortals, who had actually made good their frolic, and climbed over the division, were flung back again, very unceremoniously, by the barbaric strength and sinewy arms of the Varangians.

The people around, and in the adjacent galleries, most of whom had the air of citizens in their holiday dresses, commented a good deal on these proceedings, and were inclined strongly to make part with the Immortals. "It was a shame to the Emperor," they said, "to encourage these British barbarians to interpose themselves by violence between his person and the Immortal cohorts of the city, who were in some sort his own children."

Stephanos, the gymnastic, whose bulky strength and stature rendered him conspicuous amid this party, said, without hesitation, "If there are two people here who will join in saying that the Immortals are unjustly deprived of their right of guarding

the Emperor's person, here is the hand that shall place them beside the Imperial chair."

"Not so," quoth a centurion of the Immortals, whom we have already introduced to our readers by the name of Harpax; "not so, Stephanos; that happy time may arrive, but it is not yet come, my gem of the circus. Thou knowest that on this occasion it is one of these Counts, or western Franks, who undertakes the combat; and the Varangians, who call these people their enemies, have some reason to claim a precedency in guarding the lists, which it might not at this moment be convenient to dispute with them. Why, man, if thou wert half so witty as thou art long, thou wouldst be sensible that it were bad woodmanship to raise the hollo upon the game, ere it had been driven within compass of the nets."

While the athlete rolled his huge grey eyes as if to conjure out the sense of this intimation, his little friend Lysimachus, the artist, putting himself to pain to stand upon his tiptoe, and look intelligent, said, approaching as near as he could to Harpax's ear, "Thou mayst trust me, gallant centurion, that this man of mould and muscle shall neither start like a babbling hound on a false scent, nor become mute and inert, when the general signal is given. But tell me," said he, speaking very low, and for that purpose mounting a bench, which brought him on a level with the centurion's ear, "would it not have been better that a strong guard of the valiant Immortals had been placed in this wooden citadel to ensure the object of the day?"

"Without question," said the centurion, "it was so

meant; but these strolling Varangians have altered their station of their own authority."

"Were it not well," said Lysimachus, "that you, who are greatly more numerous than the barbarians, should begin a fray before more of these strangers arrive?"

"Content ye, friend," said the centurion, coldly, "we know our time. An attack commenced too early would be worse than thrown away, nor would an opportunity occur of executing our project in the fitting time, if an alarm were prematurely given at this moment."

So saying, he shuffled off among his fellow-soldiers, so as to avoid suspicious intercourse with such persons as were only concerned with the civic portion of the conspirators.

As the morning advanced, and the sun took a higher station in the horizon, the various persons whom curiosity, or some more decided motive, brought to see the proposed combat, were seen streaming from different parts of the town, and rushing to occupy such accommodation as the circuit round the lists afforded them. In their road to the place where preparation for combat was made, they had to ascend a sort of cape, which, in the form of a small hill, projected into the Hellespont, and the butt of which, connecting it with the shore, afforded a considerable ascent, and of course a more commanding view of the strait between Europe and Asia, than either the immediate vicinity of the city, or the still lower ground upon which the lists were erected. In passing this height, the earlier visitants of the

lists made little or no halt; but after a time, when it became obvious that those who had hurried forward to the place of combat, were lingering there without any object or occupation, they that followed them in the same route, with natural curiosity, paid a tribute to the landscape, bestowing some attention on its beauty, and paused to see what auguries could be collected from the water, which were likely to have any concern in indicating the fate of the events that were to take place. Some straggling seamen were the first who remarked that a squadron of the Greek small craft (being that of Tancred) were in the act of making their way from Asia, and threatening a descent upon Constantinople.

"It is strange," said a person, by rank the captain of a galley, "that these small vessels, which were ordered to return to Constantinople as soon as they disembarked the Latins, should have remained so long at Scutari, and should not be rowing back to the imperial city until this time, on the second day after their departure from thence."

"I pray to Heaven," said another of the same profession, "that these seamen may come alone. It seems to me as if their ensign-staffs, bowsprits, and topmasts, were decorated with the same ensigns, or nearly the same, with those which the Latins displayed upon them, when, by the Emperor's order, they were transported towards Palestine; so methinks the voyage back again resembles that of a fleet of merchant vessels, who have been prevented from discharging their cargo at the place of their destination."

"There is little good," said one of the politicians whom we formerly noticed, "in dealing with such commodities, whether they are imported or exported. Yon ample banner, which streams over the foremost galley, intimates the presence of a chieftain of no small rank among the Counts, whether it be for valour or for nobility."

The seafaring leader added, with the voice of one who hints alarming tidings, "They seem to have got to a point in the straits as high as will enable them to run down with the tide, and clear the cape which we stand on, although with what purpose they aim to land so close beneath the walls of the city, he is a wiser man than I who pretends to determine."

"Assuredly," returned his comrade, "the intention is not a kind one. The wealth of the city has temptations to a poor people, who only value the iron which they possess as affording them the means of procuring the gold which they covet."

"Ay, brother," answered Demetrius the politician, "but see you not, lying at anchor within this bay which is formed by the cape, and at the very point where these heretics are likely to be carried by the tide, six strong vessels, having the power of sending forth, not merely showers of darts and arrows, but of Grecian fire, as it is called, from their hollow decks? If these Frank gentry continue directing their course upon the Imperial city, being, as they are,

——— 'propago
Contemptrix Superûm sanè, sævæque avidissima cædis,
Et violenta;'*

* Ovid Met.

we shall speedily see a combat better worth witnessing than that announced by the great trumpet of the Varangians. If you love me, let us sit down here for a moment, and see how this matter is to end."

"An excellent motion, my ingenious friend," said Lascaris, which was the name of the other citizen; "but, bethink you, shall we not be in danger from the missiles with which the audacious Latins will not fail to return the Greek fire, if, according to your conjecture, it shall be poured upon them by the Imperial squadron?"

"That is not ill argued, my friend," said Demetrius; "but know that you have to do with a man who has been in such extremities before now; and if such a discharge should open from the sea, I would propose to you to step back some fifty yards inland, and thus to interpose the very crest of the cape between us and the discharge of missiles; a mere child might thus learn to face them without any alarm."

"You are a wise man, neighbour," said Lascaris, "and possess such a mixture of valour and knowledge as becomes a man whom a friend might be supposed safely to risk his life with. There be those, for instance, who cannot shew you the slightest glimpse of what is going on, without bringing you within peril of your life; whereas you, my worthy friend Demetrius, between your accurate knowledge of military affairs, and your regard for your friend, are sure to shew him all that is to be seen without the least risk to a person, who is naturally unwil-

ling to think of exposing himself to injury. But, Holy Virgin! what is the meaning of that red flag which the Greek Admiral has this instant hoisted?"

"Why, you see, neighbour," answered Demetrius, "yonder western heretic continues to advance without minding the various signs which our Admiral has made to him to desist, and now he hoists the bloody colours, as if a man should clench his fist and say, If you persevere in your uncivil intention, I will do so and so."

"By Saint Sophia," said Lascaris, "and that is giving him fair warning. But what is it the Imperial Admiral is about to do?"

"Run! run! friend Lascaris," said Demetrius, "or you will see more of that than perchance you have any curiosity for."

Accordingly, to add the strength of example to precept, Demetrius himself girt up his loins, and retreated with the most edifying speed to the opposite side of the ridge, accompanied by the greater part of the crowd, who had tarried there to witness the contest which the newsmonger promised, and were determined to take his word for their own safety. The sound and sight which had alarmed Demetrius, was the discharge of a large portion of Greek fire, which perhaps may be best compared to one of those immense Congreve rockets of the present day, which takes on its shoulders a small grapnel or anchor, and proceeds groaning through the air, like a fiend overburdened by the mandate of some inexorable magician, and of which the operation was so terrifying, that the crews of the vessels

attacked by this strange weapon frequently forsook every means of defence, and ran themselves ashore. One of the principal ingredients of this dreadful fire was supposed to be naphtha, or the bitumen which is collected on the banks of the Dead Sea, and which, when in a state of ignition, could only be extinguished by a very singular mixture, and which it was not likely to come in contact with. It produced a thick smoke and loud explosion, and was capable, says Gibbon, of communicating its flames with equal vehemence in descent or lateral progress.* In sieges, it was poured from the ramparts, or launched like our bombs, in red-hot balls of stone or iron, or it was darted in flax twisted round arrows and in javelins. It was considered as a state secret of the greatest importance; and for well-nigh four centuries it was unknown to the Mahomedans. But at length the composition was discovered by the Saracens, and used by them for repelling the crusaders, and overpowering the Greeks, upon whose side it had at one time been the most formidable implement of defence. Some exaggeration we must allow for a barbarous period; but there seems no doubt that the general description of the crusader Joinville should be admitted as correct:—"It came flying through the air," says that good knight, "like a winged dragon, about the thickness of a hogshead, with the report of thunder and the speed of lightning, and the darkness of the night was dispelled by this horrible illumination."

* For a full account of the Greek fire, see Gibbon, chap. 53.

Not only the bold Demetrius and his pupil Lascaris, but all the crowd whom they influenced, fled manfully when the commodore of the Greeks fired the first discharge; and as the other vessels in the squadron followed his example, the heavens were filled with the unusual and outrageous noise, while the smoke was so thick as to darken the very air. As the fugitives passed the crest of the hill, they saw the seaman, whom we formerly mentioned as a spectator, snugly reclining under cover of a dry ditch, where he managed so as to secure himself as far as possible from any accident. He could not, however, omit breaking his jest on the politicians.

"What, ho!" he cried, "my good friends," without raising himself above the counterscarp of his ditch, "will you not remain upon your station long enough to finish that hopeful lecture upon battle by sea and land, which you had so happy an opportunity of commencing? Believe me, the noise is more alarming than hurtful; the fire is all pointed in a direction opposite to yours, and if one of those dragons which you see does happen to fly landward instead of seaward, it is but the mistake of some cabin-boy, who has used his linstock with more willingness than ability."

Demetrius and Lascaris just heard enough of the naval hero's harangue, to acquaint them with the new danger with which they might be assailed by the possible misdirection of the weapons, and, rushing down towards the lists at the head of a crowd half-desperate with fear, they hastily propagated the appalling news, that the Latins were coming back

from Asia with the purpose of landing in arms, pillaging, and burning the city.

The uproar, in the meantime, of this unexpected occurrence, was such as altogether to vindicate, in public opinion, the reported cause, however exaggerated. The thunder of the Greek fire came successively, one hard upon the other, and each, in its turn, spread a blot of black smoke upon the face of the landscape, which, thickened by so many successive clouds, seemed at last, like that raised by a sustained fire of modern artillery, to overshadow the whole horizon.

The small squadron of Tancred were completely hid from view in the surging volumes of darkness, which the breath of the weapons of the enemy had spread around him; and it seemed by a red light, which began to shew itself among the thickest of the veil of darkness, that one of the flotilla at least had caught fire. Yet the Latins resisted, with an obstinacy worthy of their own courage, and the fame of their celebrated leader. Some advantage they had, on account of their small size, and their lowness in the water, as well as the clouded state of the atmosphere, which rendered them difficult marks for the fire of the Greeks.

To increase these advantages, Tancred, as well by boats as by the kind of rude signals made use of at the period, dispersed orders to his fleet, that each bark, disregarding the fate of the others, should press forward individually, and that the men from each should be put on shore wheresoever and howsoever they could effect that manœuvre. Tancred him-

self set a noble example; he was on board a stout vessel, fenced in some degree against the effect of the Greek fire by being in a great measure covered with raw hides, which hides had also been recently steeped in water. This vessel contained upwards of a hundred valiant warriors, several of them of knightly order, who had all night toiled at the humble labours of the oar, and now in the morning applied their chivalrous hands to the arblast and to the bow, which were in general accounted the weapons of persons of a lower rank. Thus armed, and thus manned, Prince Tancred bestowed upon his bark the full velocity which wind, and tide, and oar, could enable her to obtain, and placing her in the situation to profit by them as much as his maritime skill could direct, he drove with the speed of lightning among the vessels of Lemnos, plying on either side, bows, cross-bows, javelins, and military missiles of every kind, with the greater advantage that the Greeks, trusting to their artificial fire, had omitted arming themselves with other weapons; so that when the valiant Crusader bore down on them with so much fury, repaying the terrors of their fire with a storm of bolts and arrows no less formidable, they began to feel that their own advantage was much less than they had supposed, and that, like most other dangers, the maritime fire of the Greeks, when undauntedly confronted, lost at least one-half of its terrors. The Grecian sailors, too, when they observed the vessels approach so near, filled with the steel-clad Latins, began to shrink from a contest to be maintained hand to hand with so terrible an enemy.

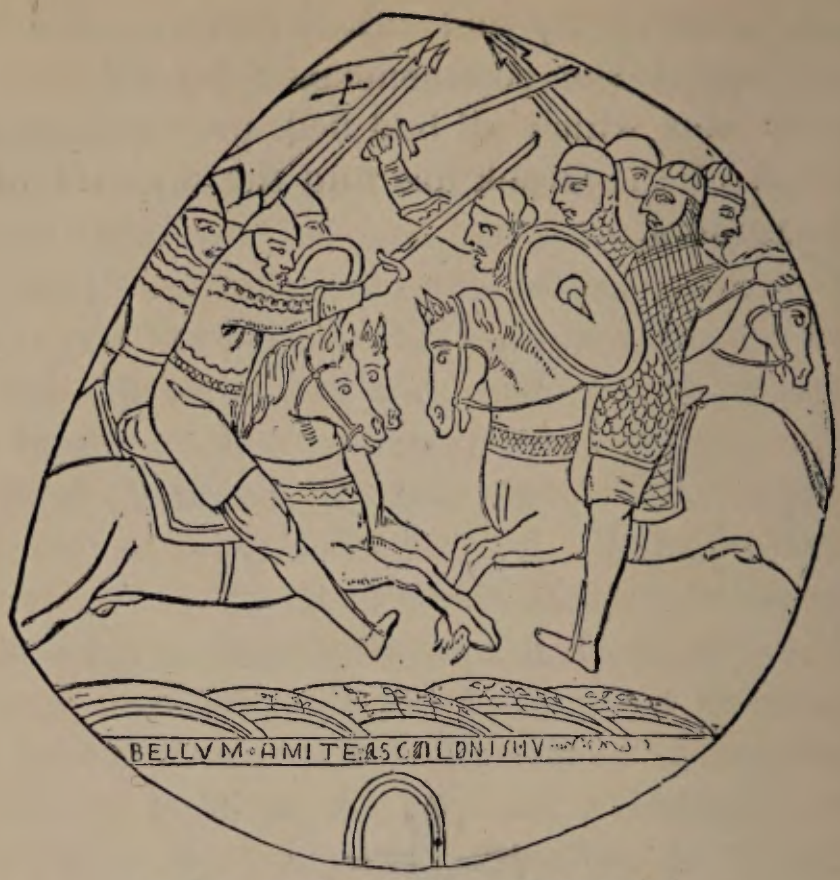
By degrees, smoke began to issue from the sides of the great Grecian argosy, and the voice of Tancred announced to his soldiers that the Grecian Admiral's vessel had taken fire, owing to negligence in the management of the means of destruction she possessed, and that all they had now to do was to maintain such a distance as to avoid sharing her fate. Sparkles and flashes of flame were next seen leaping from place to place on board of the great hulk, as if the element had had the sense and purpose of spreading wider the consternation, and disabling the few who still paid attention to the commands of their Admiral, and endeavoured to extinguish the fire. The consciousness of the combustible nature of the freight began to add despair to terror; from the boltsprit, the rigging, the yards, the sides, and every part of the vessel, the unfortunate crew were seen dropping themselves, to exchange for the most part a watery death for one by the more dreadful agency of fire. The crew of Tancred's bark, ceasing, by that generous prince's commands, to offer any additional annoyance to an enemy who was at once threatened by the perils of the ocean and of conflagration, ran their vessel ashore in a smooth part of the bay, and jumping into the shallow sea, made the land without difficulty; many of their steeds being, by the exertions of the owners, and the docility of the animals, brought ashore at the same time with their masters. Their commander lost no time in forming their serried ranks into a phalanx of lancers, few indeed at first, but perpetually increasing as ship after ship of the little flo-

tilla ran ashore, or having more deliberately moored their barks, landed their men, and joined their companions.

The cloud which had been raised by the conflict was now driven to leeward before the wind, and the strait exhibited only the relics of the combat. Here tossed upon the billows the scattered and broken remains of one or two of the Latin vessels which had been burnt at the commencement of the combat, though their crews, by the exertions of their comrades, had in general been saved. Lower down were seen the remaining five vessels of the Lemnos squadron, holding a disorderly and difficult retreat, with the purpose of gaining the harbour of Constantinople. In the place so late the scene of combat, lay moored the hulk of the Grecian Admiral, burnt to the water's edge, and still sending forth a black smoke from its scathed beams and planks. The flotilla of Tancred, busied in discharging its troops, lay irregularly scattered along the bay, the men making ashore as they could, and taking their course to join the standard of their leader. Various black substances floated on the surface of the water, nearer, or more distant to the shore; some proved to be the wreck of the vessels which had been destroyed, and others, more ominous still, the lifeless bodies of mariners who had fallen in the conflict.

The standard had been borne ashore by the Prince's favourite page, Ernest of Apulia, so soon as the keel of Tancred's galley had grazed upon the sand. It was then pitched on the top of that elevated cape between Constantinople and the lists, where

Lascaris, Demetrius, and other gossips, had held their station at the commencement of the engagement, but from which all had fled, between the mingled dread of the Greek fire and the missiles of the Latin crusaders.



GLASS PAINTING OF CRUSADERS.

CHAPTER THE THIRTIETH.

SHEATHED in complete armour, and supporting with his right hand the standard of his fathers, Tancred remained with his handful of warriors like so many statues of steel, expecting some sort of attack from the Grecian party which had occupied the lists, or from the numbers whom the city gates began now to pour forth—soldiers some of them, and others citizens, many of whom were arrayed as if for conflict. These persons, alarmed by the various accounts which were given of the combatants, and the progress of the fight, rushed towards the standard of Prince Tancred, with the intention of beating it to

the earth, and dispersing the guards who owed it homage and defence. But if the reader shall have happened to have ridden at any time through a pastoral country, with a dog of a noble race following him, he must have remarked, in the deference ultimately paid to the high-bred animal by the shepherd's cur as he crosses the lonely glen, of which the latter conceives himself the lord and guardian, something very similar to the demeanour of the incensed Greeks, when they approached near to the little band of Franks. At the first symptom of the intrusion of a stranger, the dog of the shepherd starts from his slumbers, and rushes towards the noble intruder with a clamorous declaration of war; but when the diminution of distance between them shews to the aggressor the size and strength of his opponent, he becomes like a cruiser, who, in a chase, has, to his surprise and alarm, found two tier of guns opposed to him instead of one. He halts—suspends his clamorous yelping, and, in fine, ingloriously retreats to his master, with all the dishonourable marks of positively declining the combat.

It was in this manner that the troops of the noisy Greeks, with much hallooing and many a boastful shout, hastened both from the town and from the lists, with the apparent intention of sweeping from the field the few companions of Tancred. As they advanced, however, within the power of remarking the calm and regular order of those men who had landed, and arranged themselves under this noble chieftain's banner, their minds were altogether changed as to the resolution of instant combat; their ad-

vance became an uncertain and staggering gait, their heads were more frequently turned back to the point from which they came, than towards the enemy; and their desire to provoke an instant scuffle vanished totally, when there did not appear the least symptom that their opponents cared about the matter.

It added to the extreme confidence with which the Latins kept their ground, that they were receiving frequent, though small reinforcements from their comrades, who were landing by detachments all along the beach; and that, in the course of a short hour, their amount had been raised, on horseback and foot, to a number, allowing for a few casualties, not much less than that which set sail from Scutari.

Another reason why the Latins remained unassailed, was certainly the indisposition of the two principal armed parties on shore to enter into a quarrel with them. The guards of every kind, who were faithful to the Emperor, and more especially the Varangians, had their orders to remain firm at their posts, some in the lists, and others at various places of rendezvous in Constantinople, where their presence was necessary to prevent the effects of the sudden insurrection which Alexius knew to be meditated against him. These, therefore, made no hostile demonstration towards the band of Latins, nor was it the purpose of the Emperor they should do so.

On the other hand, the greater part of the Immortal Guards, and those citizens who were prepared to play a part in the conspiracy, had been impressed by the agents of the deceased Agelastes with the opinion, that this band of Latins, commanded by Tan-

cred, the relative of Bohemond, had been despatched by the latter to their assistance. These men, therefore, stood still, and made no attempt to guide or direct the popular efforts of such as inclined to attack these unexpected visitors; in which purpose, therefore, no very great party were united, while the majority were willing enough to find an apology for remaining quiet.

In the meantime, the Emperor, from his palace of Blacquernal, observed what passed upon the straits, and beheld his navy from Lemnos totally foiled in their attempt, by means of the Greek fire, to check the intended passage of Tancred and his men. He had no sooner seen the leading ship of the squadron begin to beacon the darkness with its own fire, than the Emperor formed a secret resolution to disown the unfortunate Admiral, and make peace with the Latins, if that should be absolutely necessary, by sending them his head. He had hardly, therefore, seen the flames burst forth, and the rest of the vessels retreat from their moorings, than in his own mind, the doom of the unfortunate Phraortes, for such was the name of the Admiral, was signed and sealed.

Achilles Tatius, at the same instant, determining to keep a close eye upon the Emperor at this important crisis, came precipitately into the palace, with an appearance of great alarm.

"My Lord!—my Imperial Lord! I am unhappy to be the messenger of such unlucky news; but the Latins have in great numbers succeeded in crossing the strait from Scutari. The Lemnos squadron en-

deavoured to stop them, as was last night determined upon in the Imperial Council of War. By a heavy discharge of the Greek fire, one or two of the crusaders' vessels were consumed, but by far the greater number of them pushed on their course, burnt the leading ship of the unfortunate Phraortes, and it is strongly reported he has himself perished, with almost all his men. The rest have cut their cables, and abandoned the defence of the passage of the Hellespont."

"And you, Achilles Tatius," said the Emperor, "with what purpose is it that you now bring me this melancholy news, at a period so late, when I cannot amend the consequences?"

"Under favour, most gracious Emperor," replied the conspirator, not without colouring and stammering, "such was not my intention—I had hoped to submit a plan, by which I might easily have prepared the way for correcting this little error."

"Well, your plan, sir?" said the Emperor, dryly.

"With your sacred Majesty's leave," said the Acolyte, "I would myself have undertaken instantly to lead against this Tancred and his Italians the battle-axes of the faithful Varangian guard, who will make no more account of the small number of Franks who have come ashore, than the farmer holds of the hordes of rats and mice, and such like mischievous vermin, who have harboured in his granaries."

"And what mean you," said the Emperor, "that I am to do, while my Anglo-Saxons fight for my sake?"

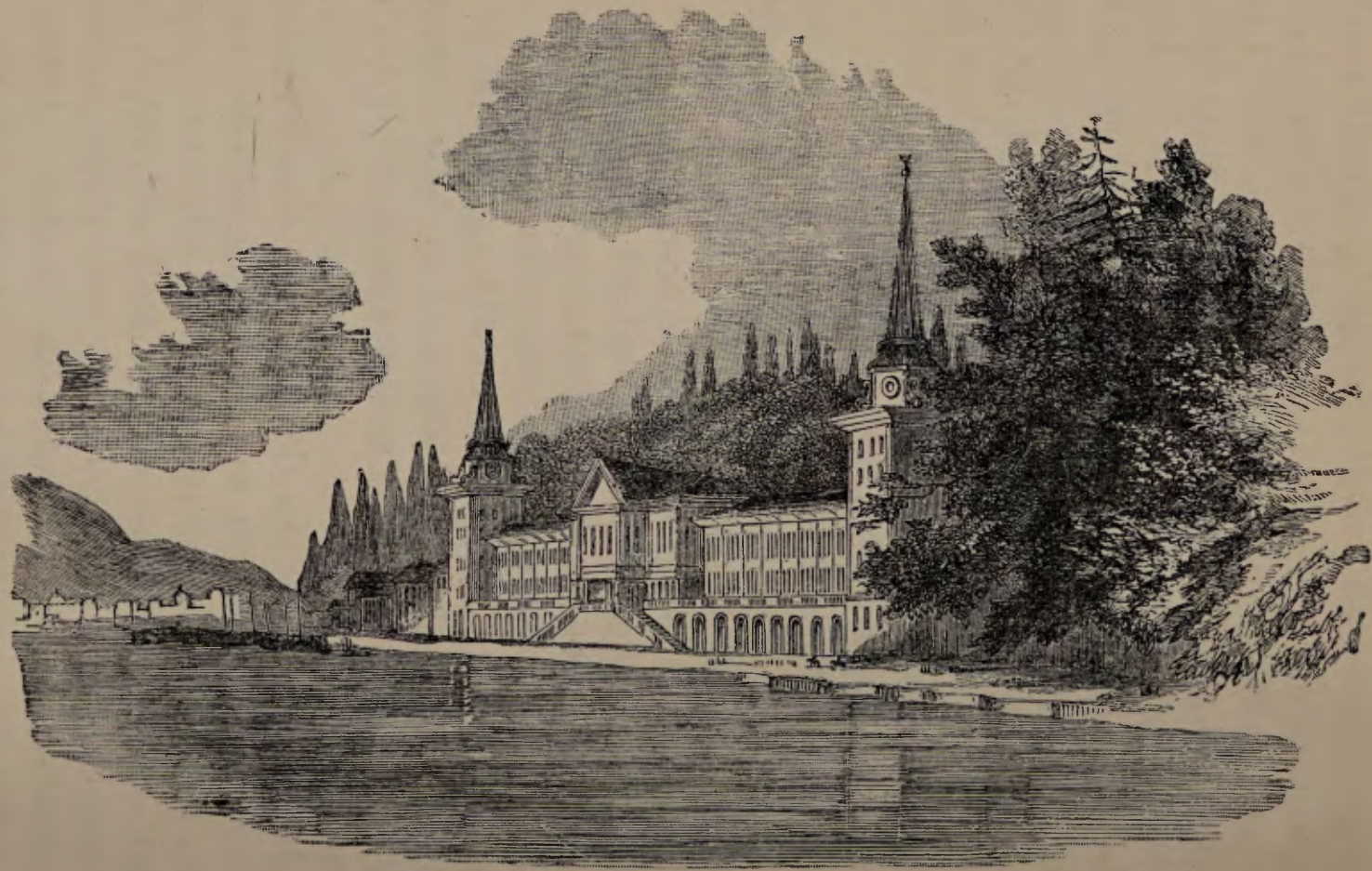
"Your Majesty," replied Achilles, not exactly sat-

isfied with the dry and caustic manner in which the Emperor addressed him, "may put yourself at the head of the Immortal cohorts of Constantinople; and I am your security, that you may either perfect the victory over the Latins, or at least redeem the most distant chance of a defeat, by advancing at the head of this choice body of domestic troops, should the day appear doubtful."

"You, yourself, Achilles Tatius," returned the Emperor, "have repeatedly assured us, that these Immortals retain a perverse attachment to our rebel Ursel. How is it, then, you would have us intrust our defence to these bands, when we have engaged our valiant Varangians in the proposed conflict with the flower of the western army?—Did you think of this risk, Sir Follower?"

Achilles Tatius, much alarmed at an intimation indicative of his purpose being known, answered, "That in his haste he had been more anxious to recommend the plan which should expose his own person to the greater danger, than that perhaps which was most attended with personal safety to his Imperial Master."

"I thank you for so doing," said the Emperor; "you have anticipated my wishes, though it is not in my power at present to follow the advice you have given me. I would have been well contented, undoubtedly, had these Latins measured their way over the strait again, as suggested by last night's council; but since they have arrived, and stand embattled on our shores, it is better that we pay them with money and with spoil, than with the lives of our gallant



CAVALRY BARRACKS AT CONSTANTINOPLE.

subjects. We cannot, after all, believe that they come with any serious intention of doing us injury; it is but the insane desire of witnessing feats of battle and single combat, which is to them the breath of their nostrils, that can have impelled them to this partial countermarch. I impose upon you, Achilles Tatius, combining the Protospathaire in the same commission with you, the duty of riding up to yonder standard, and learning of their chief, called the Prince Tancred, if he is there in person, the purpose of his return, and the cause of his entering into debate with Phraortes and the Lemnos squadron. If they send us any reasonable excuse, we shall not be averse to receive it at their hands; for we have not made so many sacrifices for the preservation of peace, to break forth into war, if, after all, so great an evil can be avoided. Thou wilt receive, therefore, with a candid and complacent mind, such apologies as they may incline to bring forward; and, be assured, that the sight of this puppet-show of a single combat, will be enough of itself to banish every other consideration from the reflection of these giddy crusaders."

A knock was at this moment heard at the door of the Emperor's apartment; and upon the word being given to enter, the Protospathaire made his appearance. He was arrayed in a splendid suit of ancient Roman fashioned armour. The want of a vizor left his countenance entirely visible; which, pale and anxious as it was, did not well become the martial crest and dancing plume with which it was decorated. He received the commission already men-

tioned with the less alacrity, because the Acolyte was added to him as his colleague; for, as the reader may have observed, these two officers were of separate factions in the army, and on indifferent terms with each other. Neither did the Acolyte consider his being united in commission with the Protospathaire, as a mark either of the Emperor's confidence or of his own safety. He was, however, in the meantime, in the Blacquernal, where the slaves of the interior made not the least hesitation, when ordered, to execute any officer of the court. The two generals had, therefore, no other alternative, than that which is allowed to two greyhounds who are reluctantly coupled together. The hope of Achilles Tatius was, that he might get safely through his mission to Tancred, after which he thought the successful explosion of the conspiracy might take place and have its course, either as a matter desired and countenanced by those Latins, or passed over as a thing in which they took no interest on either side.

By the parting order of the Emperor, they were to mount on horseback at the sounding of the great Varangian trumpet, put themselves at the head of those Anglo-Saxon guards in the court-yard of their barrack, and await the Emperor's further orders.

There was something in this arrangement which pressed hard on the conscience of Achilles Tatius, yet he was at a loss to justify his apprehensions to himself, unless from a conscious feeling of his own guilt. He felt, however, that in being detained, under pretence of an honourable mission, at the head of the Varangians, he was deprived of the liberty of

disposing of himself, by which he had hoped to communicate with the Cæsar and Hereward, whom he reckoned upon as his active accomplices, not knowing that the first was at this moment a prisoner in the Blacquernal, where Alexius had arrested him in the apartments of the Empress, and that the second was the most important support of Comnenus during the whole of that eventful day.

When the gigantic trumpet of the Varangian guards sent forth its deep signal through the city, the Protospathaire hurried Achilles along with him to the rendezvous of the Varangians, and on the way said to him, in an easy and indifferent tone, "As the Emperor is in the field in person, you, his representative, or Follower, will of course transmit no orders to the body-guard, except such as shall receive their origin from himself, so that you will consider your authority as this day suspended."

"I regret," said Achilles, "that there should have seemed any cause for such precautions; I had hoped my own truth and fidelity—but—I am obsequious to his imperial pleasure in all things."

"Such are his orders," said the other officer, "and you know under what penalty obedience is enforced."

"If I did not," said Achilles, "the composition of this body of guards would remind me, since it comprehends not only great part of those Varangians, who are the immediate defenders of the Emperor's throne, but those slaves of the interior, who are the executioners of his pleasure."

To this the Protospathaire returned no answer, while the more closely the Acolyte looked upon the

guard which attended, to the unusual number of nearly three thousand men, the more had he reason to believe that he might esteem himself fortunate, if, by the intervention of either the Cæsar, Agelastes, or Hereward, he could pass to the conspirators a signal to suspend the intended explosion, which seemed to be provided against by the Emperor with unusual caution. He would have given the full dream of empire, with which he had been for a short time lulled asleep, to have seen but a glimpse of the azure plume of Nicephorus, the white mantle of the philosopher, or even a glimmer of Hereward's battle-axe. No such objects could be seen anywhere, and not a little was the faithless Follower displeased to see that whichever way he turned his eyes, those of the Protospathaire, but especially of the trusty domestic officers of the empire, seemed to follow and watch their occupation.

Amidst the numerous soldiers whom he saw on all sides, his eye did not recognise a single man with whom he could exchange a friendly or confidential glance, and he stood in all that agony of terror, which is rendered the more discomfiting, because the traitor is conscious that, beset by various foes, his own fears are the most likely of all to betray him. Internally, as the danger seemed to increase, and as his alarmed imagination attempted to discern new reasons for it, he could only conclude that either one of the three principal conspirators, or at least some of the inferiors, had turned informers; and his doubt was, whether he should not screen his own share of what had been premeditated, by flinging himself at the

feet of the Emperor, and making a full confession. But still the fear of being premature in having recourse to such a base means of saving himself, joined to the absence of the Emperor, united to keep within his lips a secret, which concerned not only all his future fortunes, but life itself. He was in the meantime, therefore, plunged as it were in a sea of trouble and uncertainty, while the specks of land, which seemed to promise him refuge, were distant, dimly seen, and extremely difficult of attainment.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIRST.

To morrow—oh, that's sudden! Spare him, spare him:
He's not prepared to die.

SHAKSPEARE.

AT the moment when Achilles Tatius, with a feeling of much insecurity, awaited the unwinding of the perilous skein of state politics, a private council of the Imperial family was held in the hall termed the Temple of the Muses, repeatedly distinguished as the apartment in which the Princess Anna Comnena was wont to make her evening recitations to those who were permitted the honour of hearing prelections of her history. The council consisted of the Empress Irene, the Princess herself, and the Emperor, with the Patriarch of the Greek Church, as a sort of mediator between a course of severity and a dangerous degree of lenity.

"Tell not me, Irene," said the Emperor, "of the fine things attached to the praise of mercy. Here have I sacrificed my just revenge over my rival Ursel, and what good do I obtain by it? Why, the old obstinate man, instead of being tractable, and sensible of the generosity which has spared his life and eyes, can be with difficulty brought to exert himself in favour of the Prince to whom he owes them. I used to think that eyesight and the breath

of life were things which one would preserve at any sacrifice; but, on the contrary, I now believe men value them like mere toys. Talk not to me, therefore, of the gratitude to be excited by saving this ungrateful cub; and believe me, girl," turning to Anna, "that not only will all my subjects, should I follow your advice, laugh at me for sparing a man so predetermined to work my ruin, but even thou thyself wilt be the first to upbraid me with the foolish kindness thou art now so anxious to extort from me."

"Your Imperial pleasure, then," said the Patriarch, "is fixed that your unfortunate son-in-law shall suffer death for his accession to this conspiracy, deluded by that heathen villain Agelastes, and the traitorous Achilles Tatius?"

"Such is my purpose," said the Emperor; "and in evidence that I mean not again to pass over a sentence of this kind with a seeming execution only, as in the case of Ursel, this ungrateful traitor of ours shall be led from the top of the staircase, or ladder of Acheron, as it is called, through the large chamber named the Hall of Judgment, at the upper end of which are arranged the apparatus for execution, by which I swear——"

"Swear not at all!" said the Patriarch; "I forbid thee, in the name of that Heaven whose voice (though unworthy) speaks in my person, to quench the smoking flax, or destroy the slight hope which there may remain, that you may finally be persuaded to alter your purpose respecting your misguided son-in-law, within the space allotted to him to sue for

your mercy. Remember, I pray you, the remorse of Constantine."

"What means your reverence?" said Irene.

"A trifle," replied the Emperor, "not worthy being quoted from such a mouth as the Patriarch's, being, as it probably is, a relic of paganism."

"What is it?" exclaimed the females anxiously, in the hope of hearing something which might strengthen their side of the argument, and something moved, perhaps, by curiosity, a motive which seldom slumbers in a female bosom, even when the stronger passions are in arms.

"The Patriarch will tell you," answered Alexius, "since you must needs know; though I promise you, you will not receive any assistance in your argument from a silly legendary tale."

"Hear it, however," said the Patriarch; "for though it is a tale of the olden time, and sometimes supposed to refer to the period when heathenism predominated, it is no less true, that it was a vow made and registered in the chancery of the rightful Deity, by an Emperor of Greece."

"What I am now to relate to you," continued he, "is, in truth, a tale not only of a Christian Emperor, but of him who made the whole empire Christian; and of that very Constantine, who was also the first who declared Constantinople to be the metropolis of the empire. This hero, remarkable alike for his zeal for religion and for his warlike achievements, was crowned by Heaven with repeated victory, and with all manner of blessings, save that unity in his family which wise men are most ambitious to possess. Not

only was the blessing of concord among brethren denied to the family of this triumphant Emperor, but a deserving son of mature age, who had been supposed to aspire to share the throne with his father, was suddenly, and at midnight, called upon to enter his defence against a capital charge of treason. You will readily excuse my referring to the arts by which the son was rendered guilty in the eyes of the father. Be it enough to say, that the unfortunate young man fell a victim to the guilt of his step-mother, Fausta, and that he disdained to exculpate himself from a charge so gross and so erroneous. It is said, that the anger of the Emperor was kept up against his son by the sycophants who called upon Constantine to observe that the culprit disdained even to supplicate for mercy, or vindicate his innocence from so foul a charge.

"But the death-blow had no sooner struck the innocent youth, than his father obtained proof of the rashness with which he had acted. He had at this period been engaged in constructing the subterranean parts of the Blacquernal palace, which his remorse appointed to contain a record of his paternal grief and contrition. At the upper part of the staircase, called the Pit of Acheron, he caused to be constructed a large chamber, still called the Hall of Judgment, for the purpose of execution. A passage through an archway in the upper wall leads from the hall to the place of misery, where the axe, or other engine, is disposed for the execution of state prisoners of consequence. Over this archway was placed a species of marble altar, surmounted by an image of

the unfortunate Crispus—the materials were gold, and it bore the memorable inscription, TO MY SON, WHOM I RASHLY CONDEMNED, AND TOO HASTILY EXECUTED. When constructing this passage, Constantine made a vow, that he himself and his posterity, being reigning Emperors, would stand beside the statue of Crispus, at the time when any individual of their family should be led to execution, and before they suffered him to pass from the Hall of Judgment to the Chamber of Death, that they should themselves be personally convinced of the truth of the charge under which he suffered.

"Time rolled on—the memory of Constantine was remembered almost like that of a saint, and the respect paid to it threw into shadow the anecdote of his son's death. The exigencies of the state rendered it difficult to keep so large a sum in specie invested in a statue, which called to mind the unpleasant failings of so great a man. Your Imperial Highness's predecessors applied the metal which formed the statue to support the Turkish wars; and the remorse and penance of Constantine died away in an obscure tradition of the Church or of the palace. Still, however, unless your Imperial Majesty has strong reasons to the contrary, I should give it as my opinion, that you will hardly achieve what is due to the memory of the greatest of your predecessors, unless you give this unfortunate criminal, being so near a relation of your own, an opportunity of pleading his cause before passing by the altar of refuge; being the name which is commonly given to the monument of the unfortunate Crispus, son of Constantine, al-

though now deprived both of the golden letters which composed the inscription, and the golden image which represented the royal sufferer."

A mournful strain of music was now heard to ascend the stair so often mentioned.

"If I must hear the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius, ere he pass the altar of refuge, there must be no loss of time," said the Emperor; "for these melancholy sounds announce that he has already approached the Hall of Judgment."

Both the Imperial ladies began instantly, with the utmost earnestness, to deprecate the execution of the Cæsar's doom, and to conjure Alexius, as he hoped for quiet in his household, and the everlasting gratitude of his wife and daughter, that he would listen to their entreaties in behalf of an unfortunate man, who had been seduced into guilt, but not from his heart.

"I will at least see him," said the Emperor, "and the holy vow of Constantine shall be in the present instance strictly observed. But remember, you foolish women, that the state of Crispus and the present Cæsar is as different as guilt from innocence, and that their fates, therefore, may be justly decided upon opposite principles, and with opposite results. But I will confront this criminal; and you, Patriarch, may be present to render what help is in your power to a dying man; for you, the wife and mother of the traitor, you will, methinks, do well to retire to the church, and pray God for the soul of the deceased, rather than disturb his last moments with unavailing lamentations."

PROCESSION TO THE HALL OF JUDGMENT.

"Alexius," said the Empress Irene, "I beseech you to be contented; be assured that we will not leave you in this dogged humour of blood-shedding, lest you make such materials for history as are fitter for the time of Nero than of Constantine."

The Emperor, without reply, led the way into the Hall of Judgment, where a much stronger light than usual was already shining up the stair of Acheron, from which were heard to sound, by sullen and intermitted fits, the penitential psalms which the Greek Church has appointed to be sung at executions. Twenty mute slaves, the pale colour of whose turbans gave a ghastly look to the withered cast of their features, and the glaring whiteness of their eyeballs, ascended two by two, as it were from the bowels of the earth, each of them bearing in one hand a naked sabre, and in the other a lighted torch. After these came the unfortunate Nicephorus; his looks were those of a man half-dead from the terror of immediate dissolution, and what he possessed of remaining attention, was turned successively to two black-stoled monks, who were anxiously repeating religious passages to him alternately from the Greek scripture, and the form of devotion adopted by the court of Constantinople. The Cæsar's dress also corresponded to his mournful fortunes: His legs and arms were bare, and a simple white tunic, the neck of which was already open, shewed that he had assumed the garments which were to serve his last turn. A tall muscular Nubian slave, who considered himself obviously as the principal person in the procession, bore on his shoulder a large heavy heads-

man's axe, and, like a demon waiting on a sorcerer, stalked step for step after his victim. The rear of the procession was closed by a band of four priests, each of whom chanted from time to time the devotional psalm which was thundered forth on the occasion; and another of slaves, armed with bows and quivers, and with lances, to resist any attempt at rescue, if such should be offered.

It would have required a harder heart than that of the unlucky Princess to have resisted this gloomy apparatus of fear and sorrow, surrounding, at the same time directed against, a beloved object, the lover of her youth, and the husband of her bosom, within a few minutes of the termination of his mortal career.

As the mournful train approached towards the altar of refuge, half-encircled as it now was by the two great and expanded arms which projected from the wall, the Emperor, who stood directly in the passage, threw upon the flame of the altar some chips of aromatic wood, steeped in spirit of wine, which, leaping at once into a blaze, illuminated the doleful procession, the figure of the principal culprit, and the slaves, who had most of them extinguished their flambeaux so soon as they had served the purpose of lighting them up the staircase.

The sudden light spread from the altar failed not to make the Emperor and the Princesses visible to the mournful group which approached through the hall. All halted—all were silent. It was a meeting, as the Princess has expressed herself in her historical work, such as took place betwixt Ulysses and the

inhabitants of the other world, who, when they tasted of the blood of his sacrifices, recognised him indeed, but with empty lamentations, and gestures feeble and shadowy. The hymn of contrition sunk also into silence; and, of the whole group, the only figure rendered more distinct, was the gigantic executioner, whose high and furrowed forehead, as well as the broad steel of his axe, caught and reflected back the bright gleam from the altar. Alexius saw the necessity of breaking the silence which ensued, lest it should give the intercessors for the prisoner an opportunity of renewing their entreaties.

"Nicephorus Briennius," he said, with a voice which, although generally interrupted by a slight hesiation, which procured him, among his enemies, the nickname of the Stutterer, yet, upon important occasions like the present, was so judiciously tuned and balanced in its sentences, that no such defect was at all visible—"Nicephorus Briennius," he said, "late Cæsar, the lawful doom hath been spoken, that, having conspired against the life of thy rightful sovereign and affectionate father, Alexius Comnenus, thou shalt suffer the appropriate sentence, by having thy head struck from thy body. Here, therefore, at the last altar of refuge, I meet thee, according to the vow of the immortal Constantine, for the purpose of demanding whether thou hast anything to allege why this doom should not be executed? Even at this eleventh hour, thy tongue is unloosed to speak with freedom what may concern thy life. All is prepared in this world and in the next. Look forward beyond yon archway—the block is fixed. Look

behind thee, thou seest the axe already sharpened —thy place for good or evil in the next world is already determined—time flies—eternity approaches. If thou hast aught to say, speak it freely—if nought, confess the justice of thy sentence, and pass on to death."

The Emperor commenced this oration, with those looks described by his daughter as so piercing, that they dazzled like lightning, and his periods, if not precisely flowing like burning lava, were yet the accents of a man having the power of absolute command, and as such produced an effect not only on the criminal, but also upon the Prince himself, whose watery eyes and faltering voice acknowledged his sense and feeling of the fatal import of the present moment.

Rousing himself to the conclusion of what he had commenced, the Emperor again demanded whether the prisoner had anything to say in his own defence.

Nicephorus was not one of those hardened criminals who may be termed the very prodigies of history, from the coolness with which they contemplated the consummation of their crimes, whether in their own punishment, or the misfortunes of others. "I have been tempted," he said, dropping on his knees, "and I have fallen. I have nothing to allege in excuse of my folly and ingratitude; but I stand prepared to die to expiate my guilt." A deep sigh, almost amounting to a scream, was heard, close behind the Emperor, and its cause assigned by the sudden exclamation of Irene,—"My lord! my lord! your daughter is gone!" And in fact Anna Comnena

had sunk into her mother's arms without either sense or motion. The father's attention was instantly called to support his swooning child, while the unhappy husband strove with the guards to be permitted to go to the assistance of his wife. "Give me but five minutes of that time which the law has abridged—let my efforts but assist in recalling her to a life which should be as long as her virtues and her talents deserve; and then let me die at her feet, for I care not to go an inch beyond."

The Emperor, who in fact had been more astonished at the boldness and rashness of Nicephorus, than alarmed by his power, considered him as a man rather misled than misleading others, and felt, therefore, the full effect of this last interview. He was, besides, not naturally cruel, where severities were to be enforced under his own eye.

"The divine and immortal Constantine," he said, "did not, I am persuaded, subject his descendants to this severe trial, in order further to search out the innocence of the criminals, but rather to give to those who came after him an opportunity of generously forgiving a crime which could not, without pardon—the express pardon of the Prince—escape unpunished. I rejoice that I am born of the willow rather than of the oak, and I acknowledge my weakness, that not even the safety of my own life, or resentment of this unhappy man's treasonable machinations, have the same effect with me as the tears of my wife, and the swooning of my daughter. Rise up, Nicephorus Briennius, freely pardoned, and restored even to the rank of Cæsar. We will direct

thy pardon to be made out by the great Logothete, and sealed with the golden bull. For four-and-twenty hours thou art a prisoner, until an arrangement is made for preserving the public peace. Meanwhile, thou wilt remain under the charge of the Patriarch, who will be answerable for thy forthcoming. — Daughter and wife, you must now go hence to your own apartment; a future time will come, during which you may have enough of weeping and embracing, mourning and rejoicing. Pray Heaven that I, who, having been trained on till I have sacrificed justice and true policy to uxorious compassion and paternal tenderness of heart, may not have cause at last for grieving in good earnest for all the events of this miscellaneous drama."

The pardoned Cæsar, who endeavoured to regulate his ideas according to this unexpected change, found it as difficult to reconcile himself to the reality of his situation as Ursel to the face of nature, after having been long deprived of enjoying it; so much do the dizziness and confusion of ideas, occasioned by moral and physical causes of surprise and terror, resemble each other in their effects on the understanding.

At length he stammered forth a request that he might be permitted to go to the field with the Emperor, and divert, by the interposition of his own body, the traitorous blows which some desperate man might aim against that of his Prince, in a day which was too likely to be one of danger and bloodshed.

"Hold there!" said Alexius Comnenus;—"we will

not begin thy newly-redeemed life by renewed doubts of thine allegiance; yet it is but fitting to remind thee, that thou art still the nominal and ostensible head of those who expect to take a part in this day's insurrection, and it will be the safest course to trust its pacification to others than to thee. Go, sir, compare notes with the Patriarch, and merit your pardon by confessing to him any traitorous intentions concerning this foul conspiracy with which we may be as yet unacquainted. Daughter and wife, farewell! I must now depart for the lists, where I have to speak with the traitor Achilles Tatius and the heathenish infidel Agelastes, if he still lives, but of whose providential death I hear a confirmed rumour."

"Yet do not go, my dearest father!" said the Princess; "but let me rather go to encourage the loyal subjects in your behalf. The extreme kindness which you have extended towards my guilty husband, convinces me of the extent of your affection towards your unworthy daughter, and the greatness of the sacrifice which you have made to her almost childish affection for an ungrateful man who put your life in danger."

"That is to say, daughter," said the Emperor, smiling, "that the pardon of your husband is a boon which has lost its merit when it is granted. Take my advice, Anna, and think otherwise; wives and their husbands ought in prudence to forget their offences towards each other as soon as human nature will permit them. Life is too short, and conjugal tranquillity too uncertain, to admit of dwelling long

upon such irritating subjects. To your apartments, Princesses, and prepare the scarlet-buskins, and the embroidery which is displayed on the cuffs and collars of the Cæsar's robe, indicative of his high rank. He must not be seen without them on the morrow.—Reverend father, I remind you once more that the Cæsar is in your personal custody from this moment until to-morrow at the same hour."

They parted; the Emperor repairing to put himself at the head of his Varangian guards—the Cæsar, under the superintendence of the Patriarch, withdrawing into the interior of the Blacquernal Palace, where Nicephorus Briennius was under the necessity of "unthreading the rude eye of rebellion," and throwing such lights as were in his power upon the progress of the conspiracy.

"Agelastes," he said, "Achilles Tatius, and Hereward the Varangian, were the persons principally entrusted in its progress. But whether they had been all true to their engagements, he did not pretend to be assured."

In the female apartments there was a violent discussion betwixt Anna Comnena and her mother. The Princess had undergone during the day many changes of sentiment and feeling; and though they had finally united themselves into one strong interest in her husband's favour, yet no sooner was the fear of his punishment removed, than the sense of his ungrateful behaviour began to revive. She became sensible also that a woman of her extraordinary attainments, who had been by a universal course of flattery disposed to entertain a very high opinion of

her own consequence, made rather a poor figure when she had been the passive subject of a long series of intrigues, by which she was destined to be disposed of in one way or the other, according to the humour of a set of subordinate conspirators, who never so much as dreamed of regarding her as a being capable of forming a wish in her own behalf, or even yielding or refusing a consent. Her father's authority over her, and right to dispose of her, was less questionable; but even then it was something derogatory to the dignity of a Princess born in the purple—an authoress besides, and giver of immortality—to be, without her own consent, thrown, as it were, at the head now of one suitor, now of another, however mean or disgusting, whose alliance could for the time benefit the Emperor. The consequence of these moody reflections was, that Anna Comnena deeply toiled in spirit for the discovery of some means by which she might assert her sullied dignity, and various were the expedients which she revolved.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SECOND.

> But now the hand of fate is on the curtain,
> And brings the scene to light.
>
> DON SEBASTIAN.

THE gigantic trumpet of the Varangians sounded its loudest note of march, and the squadrons of the faithful guards, sheathed in complete mail, and enclosing in their centre the person of their Imperial master, set forth upon their procession through the streets of Constantinople. The form of Alexius, glittering in his splendid armour, seemed no unmeet central point for the force of an empire; and while the citizens crowded in the train of him and his escort, there might be seen a visible difference between those who came with the premeditated intention of tumult, and the greater part, who, like the multitude of every great city, thrust each other, and shout for rapture on account of any cause for which a crowd may be collected together. The hope of the conspirators was lodged chiefly in the Immortal Guards, who were levied principally for the defence of Constantinople, partook of the general prejudices of the citizens, and had been particularly influenced by those in favour of Ursel, by whom, previous to his imprisonment, they had themselves been commanded. The conspirators had determined that those of this body who were considered as most discon-

tented, should early in the morning take possession of the posts in the lists most favourable for their purpose of assaulting the Emperor's person. But, in spite of all efforts short of actual violence, for which the time did not seem to be come, they found themselves disappointed in this purpose, by parties of the Varangian guards, planted with apparent carelessness, but in fact, with perfect skill, for the prevention of their enterprise. Somewhat confounded at perceiving that a design, which they could not suppose to be suspected, was, nevertheless, on every part controlled and counter-checked, the conspirators began to look for the principal persons of their own party, on whom they depended for orders in this emergency; but neither the Cæsar nor Agelastes was to be seen, whether in the lists or on the military march from Constantinople; and though Achilles Tatius rode in the latter assembly, yet it might be clearly observed that he was rather attending upon the Protospathaire, than assuming that independence as an officer which he loved to affect.

In this manner, as the Emperor with his glittering bands approached the phalanx of Tancred and his followers, who were drawn up, it will be remembered, upon a rising cape between the city and the lists, the main body of the Imperial procession deflected in some degree from the straight road, in order to march past them without interruption; while the Protospathaire and the Acolyte passed under the escort of a band of Varangians, to bear the Emperor's inquiries to Prince Tancred, concerning the purpose of his being there with his band. The short march was

soon performed—the large trumpet which attended the two officers sounded a parley, and Tancred himself, remarkable for that personal beauty which Tasso has preferred to any of the crusaders, except Rinaldo d'Este, the creature of his own poetical imagination, advanced to parley with them.

"The Emperor of Greece," said the Protospathaire to Tancred, "requires the Prince of Otranto to shew, by the two high officers who shall deliver him this message, with what purpose he has returned, contrary to his oath, to the right side of these straits; assuring Prince Tancred, at the same time, that nothing will so much please the Emperor, as to receive an answer not at variance with his treaty with the Duke of Bouillon, and the oath which was taken by the crusading nobles and their soldiers; since that would enable the Emperor, in conformity to his own wishes, by his kind reception of Prince Tancred and his troop, to shew how high is his estimation of the dignity of the one, and the bravery of both—We wait an answer."

The tone of the message had nothing in it very alarming, and its substance cost Prince Tancred very little trouble to answer. "The cause," he said, "of the Prince of Otranto appearing here with fifty lances, is this cartel, in which a combat is appointed betwixt Nicephorus Briennius, called the Cæsar, a high member of this empire, and a worthy knight of great fame, the partner of the Pilgrims who have taken the Cross, in their high vow to rescue Palestine from the infidels. The name of the said Knight is the redoubted Robert of Paris. It becomes, there-

fore, an obligation, indispensable upon the Holy Pilgrims of the Crusade, to send one chief of their number, with a body of men-at-arms, sufficient to see, as is usual, fair play between the combatants. That such is their intention, may be seen from their sending no more than fifty lances, with their furniture and following; whereas it would have cost them no trouble to have detached ten times the number, had they nourished any purpose of interfering by force, or disturbing the fair combat which is about to take place. The Prince of Otranto, therefore, and his followers, will place themselves at the disposal of the Imperial Court, and witness the proceedings of the combat, with the most perfect confidence that the rules of fair battle will be punctually observed."

The two Grecian officers transmitted this reply to the Emperor, who heard it with pleasure, and, immediately proceeding to act upon the principle which he had laid down, of maintaining peace, if possible, with the crusaders, named Prince Tancred with the Protospathaire as Field Marshals of the lists, fully empowered, under the Emperor, to decide all the terms of the combat, and to have recourse to Alexius himself where their opinions disagreed. This was made known to the assistants, who were thus prepared for the entry into the lists of the Grecian officer and the Italian prince in full armour, while a proclamation announced to all the spectators their solemn office. The same annunciation commanded the assistants of every kind to clear a convenient part of the seats which surrounded the lists on one

KNIGHT IN FULL ARMOUR, *temp.* TALE.

side, that it might serve for the accommodation of Prince Tancred's followers.

Achilles Tatius, who was a heedful observer of all these passages, saw with alarm, that by the last collocation the armed Latins were interposed between the Immortal Guards and the discontented citizens, which made it most probable that the conspiracy was discovered, and that Alexius found he had a good right to reckon upon the assistance of Tancred and his forces in the task of suppressing it. This, added to the cold and caustic manner in which the Emperor communicated his commands to him, made the Acolyte of opinion, that his best chance of escape from the danger in which he was now placed, was, that the whole conspiracy should fall to the ground, and that the day should pass without the least attempt to shake the throne of Alexius Comnenus. Even then it continued highly doubtful, whether a despot, so wily and so suspicious as the Emperor, would think it sufficient to rest satisfied with the private knowledge of the undertaking, and its failure, with which he appeared to be possessed, without putting into exercise the bow-strings and the blinding-irons of the mutes of the interior. There was, however, little possibility either of flight or of resistance. The least attempt to withdraw himself from the neighbourhood of those faithful followers of the Emperor, personal foes of his own, by whom he was gradually and more closely surrounded, became each moment more perilous, and more certain to provoke a rupture, which it was the interest of the weaker party to delay, with whatever difficulty. And while the sol-

diers under Achilles's immediate authority seemed still to treat him as their superior officer, and appeal to him for the word of command, it became more and more evident that the slightest degree of suspicion which should be excited, would be the instant signal for his being placed under arrest. With a trembling heart, therefore, and eyes dimmed by the powerful idea of soon parting with the light of day, and all that it made visible, the Acolyte saw himself condemned to watch the turn of circumstances, over which he could have no influence, and to content himself with waiting the result of a drama, in which his own life was concerned, although the piece was played by others. Indeed, it seemed as if through the whole assembly some signal was waited for, which no one was in readiness to give.

The discontented citizens and soldiers looked in vain for Agelastes and the Cæsar, and when they observed the condition of Achilles Tatius, it seemed such as rather to express doubt and consternation, than to give encouragement to the hopes they had entertained. Many of the lower classes, however, felt too secure in their own insignificance to fear the personal consequences of a tumult, and were desirous, therefore, to provoke the disturbance, which seemed hushing itself to sleep.

A hoarse murmur, which attained almost the importance of a shout, exclaimed,—"Justice, justice!—Ursel, Ursel!—The rights of the Immortal Guards!" etc. At this the trumpet of the Varangians awoke, and its tremendous tones were heard to peal loudly over the whole assembly, as the voice of its presi-

ding deity. A dead silence prevailed in the multitude, and the voice of a herald announced, in the name of Alexius Comnenus, his sovereign will and pleasure.

"Citizens of the Roman Empire, your complaints, stirred up by factious men, have reached the ear of your Emperor; you shall yourselves be witness to his power of gratifying his people. At your request, and before your own sight, the visual ray which hath been quenched shall be re-illumined—the mind whose efforts were restricted to the imperfect supply of individual wants shall be again extended, if such is the owner's will, to the charge of an ample Theme or division of the empire. Political jealousy, more hard to receive conviction than the blind to receive sight, shall yield itself conquered, by the Emperor's paternal love of his people, and his desire to give them satisfaction. Ursel, the darling of your wishes, supposed to be long dead, or at least believed to exist in blinded seclusion, is restored to you well in health, clear in eyesight, and possessed of every faculty necessary to adorn the Emperor's favour, or merit the affection of the people."

As the herald thus spoke, a figure, which had hitherto stood shrouded behind some officers of the interior, now stepped forth, and flinging from him a dusky veil, in which he was wrapt, appeared in a dazzling scarlet garment, of which the sleeves and buskins displayed those ornaments which expressed a rank nearly adjacent to that of the Emperor himself. He held in his hand a silver truncheon, the badge of delegated command over the Immortal Guards, and, kneeling before the Emperor, pre-

sented it to his hands, intimating a virtual resignation of the command which it implied. The whole assembly were electrified at the appearance of a person long supposed either dead, or by cruel means rendered incapable of public trust. Some recognised the man whose appearance and features were not easily forgot, and gratulated him upon his most unexpected return to the service of his country. Others stood suspended in amazement, not knowing whether to trust their eyes, while a few determined malcontents eagerly pressed upon the assembly an allegation that the person presented as Ursel was only a counterfeit, and the whole a trick of the Emperor.

"Speak to them, noble Ursel," said the Emperor. "Tell them, that if I have sinned against thee, it has been because I was deceived, and that my disposition to make thee amends is as ample as ever was my purpose of doing thee wrong."

"Friends and countrymen," said Ursel, turning himself to the assembly, "his Imperial Majesty permits me to offer my assurance, that if in any former part of my life I have suffered at his hand, it is more than wiped out by the feelings of a moment so glorious as this; and that I am well satisfied, from the present instant, to spend what remains of my life in the service of the most generous and beneficent of sovereigns, or, with his permission, to bestow it in preparing, by devotional exercises, for an infinite immortality to be spent in the society of saints and angels. Whichever choice I shall make, I reckon that you, my beloved countrymen, who have remembered me so kindly during years of darkness and

captivity, will not fail to afford me the advantage of your prayers."

This sudden apparition of the long-lost Ursel had too much of that which elevates and surprises not to captivate the multitude, and they sealed their reconciliation with three tremendous shouts, which are said so to have shaken the air, that birds, incapable of sustaining themselves, sunk down exhausted out of their native element.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-THIRD.

"What, leave the combat out!" exclaimed the knight.
"Yea! or we must renounce the Stagyrite.
So large a crowd the stage will ne'er contain."
—"Then build a new, or act it on a plain."

POPE.

THE sounds of the gratulating shout had expanded over the distant shores of the Bosphorus by mountain and forest, and died at length in the farthest echoes, when the people, in the silence which ensued, appeared to ask each other what next scene was about to adorn a pause so solemn and a stage so august. The pause would probably have soon given place to some new clamour, for a multitude, from whatever cause assembled, seldom remains long silent, had not a new signal from the Varangian trumpet given notice of a fresh purpose to solicit their attention. The blast had something in its tone spirit-stirring and yet melancholy, partaking both of the character of a point of war, and of the doleful sounds which might be chosen to announce an execution of peculiar solemnity. Its notes were high and widely extended, and prolonged and long dwelt upon, as if the brazen clamour had been waked by something more tremendous than the lungs of mere mortals.

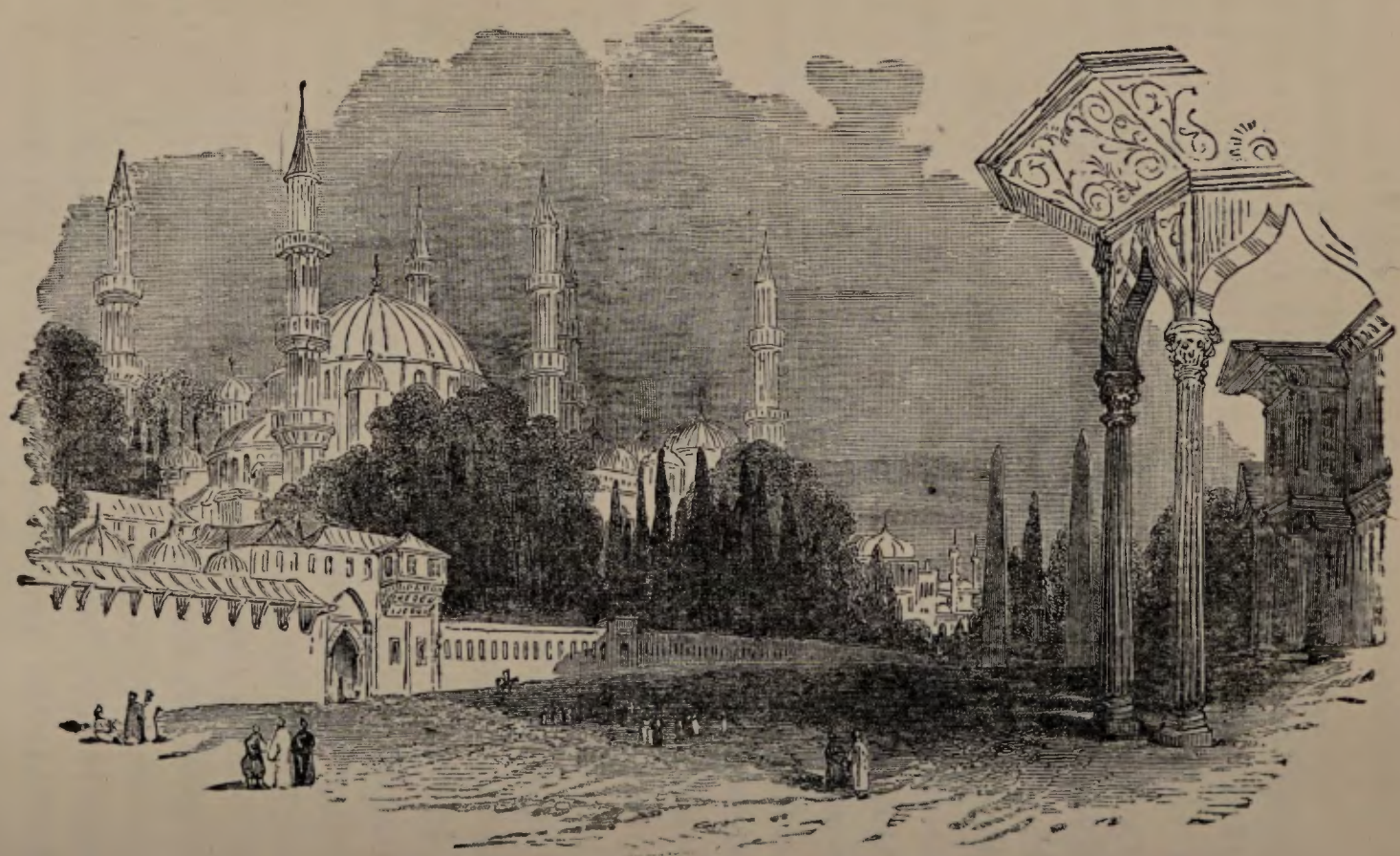
The multitude appeared to acknowledge these aw-

ful sounds, which were indeed such as habitually solicited their attention to Imperial edicts of melancholy import, by which rebellions were announced, dooms of treason discharged, and other tidings of a great and affecting import intimated to the people of Constantinople. When the trumpet had in its turn ceased, with its thrilling and doleful notes, to agitate the immense assembly, the voice of the herald again addressed them.

It announced in a grave and affecting strain, that it sometimes chanced how the people failed in their duty to a sovereign, who was unto them as a father, and how it became the painful duty of the prince to use the rod of correction rather than the olive sceptre of mercy.

"Fortunate," continued the herald, "it is, when the supreme Deity, having taken on himself the preservation of a throne, in beneficence and justice resembling his own, has also assumed the most painful task of his earthly delegate, by punishing those whom his unerring judgment acknowledges as most guilty, and leaving to his substitute the more agreeable task of pardoning such of those as art has misled, and treachery hath involved in its snares.

"Such being the case, Greece and its accompanying Themes are called upon to listen and learn that a villain, namely Agelastes, who had insinuated himself into the favour of the Emperor, by affectation of deep knowledge and severe virtue, had formed a treacherous plan for the murder of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus, and a revolution in the state. This person, who, under pretended wisdom, hid the



THE HIPPODROME AT CONSTANTINOPLE.

doctrines of a heretic and the vices of a sensualist, had found proselytes to his doctrines even among the Emperor's household, and those persons who were most bound to him, and down to the lower order, to excite the last of whom were dispersed a multitude of forged rumours, similar to those concerning Ursel's death and blindness, of which your own eyes have witnessed the falsehood."

The people, who had hitherto listened in silence, upon this appeal broke forth in a clamorous assent. They had scarcely been again silent, ere the iron-voiced herald continued his proclamation.

"Not Korah, Dathan, and Abiram," he said, "had more justly, or more directly, fallen under the doom of an offended Deity, than this villain, Agelastes. The steadfast earth gaped to devour the apostate sons of Israel, but the termination of this wretched man's existence has been, as far as can now be known, by the direct means of an evil spirit, whom his own arts had evoked into the upper air. By the spirit, as would appear by the testimony of a noble lady and other females, who witnessed the termination of his life, Agelastes was strangled, a fate well-becoming his odious crimes. Such a death, even of a guilty man, must, indeed, be most painful to the humane feelings of the Emperor, because it involves suffering beyond this world. But the awful catastrophe carries with it this comfort, that it absolves the Emperor from the necessity of carrying any farther a vengeance which Heaven itself seems to have limited to the exemplary punishment of the principal conspirator. Some changes of offices and situations

shall be made, for the sake of safety and good order; but the secret who had or who had not been concerned in this awful crime, shall sleep in the bosoms of the persons themselves implicated, since the Emperor is determined to dismiss their offence from his memory, as the effect of a transient delusion. Let all, therefore, who now hear me, whatever consciousness they may possess of a knowledge of what was this day intended, return to their houses, assured that their own thoughts will be their only punishment. Let them rejoice that Almighty goodness has saved them from the meditations of their own hearts, and, according to the affecting language of Scripture, —'Let them repent and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall them.'"

The voice of the herald then ceased, and was again answered by the shouts of the audience. These were unanimous; for circumstances contributed to convince the malcontent party that they stood at the Sovereign's mercy, and the edict that they heard having shewn his acquaintance with their guilt, it lay at his pleasure to let loose upon them the strength of the Varangians, while, from the terms on which it had pleased him to receive Tancred, it was probable that the Apuleian forces were also at his disposal.

The voices, therefore, of the bulky Stephanos, of Harpax the centurion, and other rebels, both of the camp and city, were the first to thunder forth their gratitude for the clemency of the Emperor, and their thanks to Heaven for his preservation.

The audience, reconciled to the thoughts of the

discovered and frustrated conspiracy, began meantime, according to their custom, to turn themselves to the consideration of the matter which had more avowedly called them together, and private whispers, swelling by degrees into murmurs, began to express the dissatisfaction of the citizens at being thus long assembled, without receiving any communication respecting the announced purpose of their meeting.

Alexius was not slow to perceive the tendency of their thoughts; and, on a signal from his hand, the trumpets blew a point of war, in sounds far more lively than those which had prefaced the Imperial edict. "Robert, Count of Paris," then said a herald, "art thou here in thy place, or by knightly proxy, to answer the challenge brought against thee by his Imperial Highness Nicephorus Briennius, Cæsar of this empire?"

The Emperor conceived himself to have equally provided against the actual appearance at this call of either of the parties named, and had prepared an exhibition of another kind, namely, certain cages, tenanted by wild animals, which being now loosened should do their pleasure with each other in the eyes of the assembly. His astonishment and confusion, therefore, were great, when, as the last note of the proclamation died in the echo, Count Robert of Paris stood forth, armed cap-a-pie, his mailed charger led behind him from within the curtained enclosure, at one end of the lists, as if ready to mount at the signal of the marshal.

The alarm and the shame that were visible in every countenance near the Imperial presence when

no Cæsar came forth in like fashion to confront the formidable Frank, were not of long duration. Hardly had the style and title of the Count of Paris been duly announced by the heralds, and their second summons of his antagonist uttered in due form, when a person, dressed like one of the Varangian Guards, sprung into the lists, and announced himself as ready to do battle in the name and place of the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius, and for the honour of the empire.

Alexius, with the utmost joy, beheld this unexpected assistance, and readily gave his consent to the bold soldier who stood thus forward in the hour of utmost need, to take upon himself the dangerous office of champion. He the more readily acquiesced, as, from the size and appearance of the soldier, and the gallant bearing he displayed, he had no doubt of his individual person, and fully confided in his valour. But Prince Tancred interposed his opposition.

"The lists," he said, "were only open to knights and nobles; or, at any rate, men were not permitted to meet therein who were not of some equality of birth and blood; nor could he remain a silent witness where the laws of chivalry are in such respects forgotten."

"Let Count Robert of Paris," said the Varangian, "look upon my countenance, and say whether he has not, by promise, removed all objection to our contest which might be founded upon an inequality of condition, and let him be judge himself, whether, by meeting me in this field, he will do more than

comply with a compact which he has long since become bound by."

Count Robert, upon this appeal, advanced and acknowledged, without further debate, that, notwithstanding their difference of rank, he held himself bound by his solemn word to give this valiant soldier a meeting in the field. That he regretted, on account of this gallant man's eminent virtues, and the high services he had received at his hands, that they should now stand upon terms of such bloody arbitration; but since nothing was more common, than that the fate of war called on friends to meet each other in mortal combat, he would not shrink from the engagement he had pledged himself to; nor did he think his quality in the slightest degree infringed or diminished, by meeting in battle a warrior so well known and of such good account as Hereward, the brave Varangian. He added, that "he willingly admitted that the combat should take place on foot, and with the battle-axe, which was the ordinary weapon of the Varangian guard."

Hereward had stood still, almost like a statue, while this discourse passed; but when the Count of Paris had made this speech, he inclined himself towards him with a graceful obeisance, and expressed himself honoured and gratified by the manly manner in which the Count acquitted himself, according to his promise, with complete honour and fidelity.

"What we are to do," said Count Robert with a sigh of regret, which even his love of battle could not prevent, "let us do quickly; the heart may be affected, but the hand must do its duty."

Hereward assented, with the additional remark, "Let us then lose no more time, which is already flying fast." And, grasping his axe, he stood prepared for combat.

"I also am ready," said Count Robert of Paris, taking the same weapon from a Varangian soldier, who stood by the lists. Both were immediately upon the alert, nor did further forms or circumstances put off the intended duel.

The first blows were given and parried with great caution, and Prince Tancred and others thought that on the part of Count Robert the caution was much greater than usual; but, in combat as in food, the appetite increases with the exercise. The fiercer passions began, as usual, to awaken with the clash of arms and the sense of deadly blows, some of which were made with great fury on either side, and parried with considerable difficulty, and not so completely but that blood flowed on both their parts. The Greeks looked with astonishment on a single combat, such as they had seldom witnessed, and held their breath as they beheld the furious blows dealt by either warrior, and expected with each stroke the annihilation of one or other of the combatants. As yet their strength and agility seemed somewhat equally matched, although those who judged with more pretension to knowledge, were of opinion, that Count Robert spared putting forth some part of the military skill for which he was celebrated; and the remark was generally made and allowed, that he had surrendered a great advantage by not insisting upon his right to fight upon horseback. On the other

hand, it was the general opinion that the gallant Varangian omitted to take advantage of one or two opportunities afforded him by the heat of Count Robert's temper, who obviously was incensed at the duration of the combat.

Accident at length seemed about to decide what had been hitherto an equal contest. Count Robert making a feint on one side of his antagonist, struck him on the other, which was uncovered, with the edge of his weapon, so that the Varangian reeled, and seemed in the act of falling to the earth. The usual sound made by spectators at the sight of any painful or unpleasant circumstance, by drawing the breath between the teeth, was suddenly heard to pass through the assembly, while a female voice loud and eagerly exclaimed,—"Count Robert of Paris!—forget not this day that thou owest a life to Heaven and me." The Count was in the act of again seconding his blow, with what effect could hardly be judged, when this cry reached his ears, and apparently took away his disposition for farther combat.

"I acknowledge the debt," he said, sinking his battle-axe, and retreating two steps from his antagonist, who stood in astonishment, scarcely recovered from the stunning effect of the blow by which he was so nearly prostrated. He sank the blade of his battle-axe in imitation of his antagonist, and seemed to wait in suspense what was to be the next process of the combat. "I acknowledge my debt," said the valiant Count of Paris, "alike to Bertha of Britain and to the Almighty, who has preserved me from the crime of ungrateful blood-guiltiness.—You have seen

the fight, gentlemen," turning to Tancred and his chivalry, "and can testify, on your honour, that it has been maintained fairly on both sides, and without advantage on either. I presume my honourable antagonist has by this time satisfied the desire which brought me under his challenge, and which certainly had no taste in it of personal or private quarrel. On my part, I retain towards him such a sense of personal obligation as would render my continuing this combat, unless compelled to it by self-defence, a shameful and sinful action."

Alexius gladly embraced the terms of truce, which he was far from expecting, and threw down his warder, in signal that the duel was ended. Tancred, though somewhat surprised, and perhaps even scandalized, that a private soldier of the Emperor's guard should have so long resisted the utmost efforts of so approved a knight, could not but own that the combat had been fought with perfect fairness and equality, and decided upon terms dishonourable tone ither party. The Count's character being well-known and established amongst the crusaders, they were compelled to believe that some motive of a most potent nature formed the principle upon which, very contrary to his general practice, he had proposed a cessation of the combat before it was brought to a deadly, or at least to a decisive conclusion. The edict of the Emperor upon the occasion, therefore, passed into a law, acknowledged by the assent of the chiefs present, and especially affirmed and gratulated by the shouts of the assembled spectators.

But perhaps the most interesting figure in the

assembly was that of the bold Varangian, arrived so suddenly at a promotion of military renown, which the extreme difficulty he had experienced in keeping his ground against Count Robert had prevented him from anticipating, although his modesty had not diminished the indomitable courage with which he maintained the contest. He stood in the middle of the lists, his face ruddy with the exertion of the combat, and not less so from the modest consciousness proper to the plainness and simplicity of his character, which was disconcerted by finding himself the central point of the gaze of the multitude.

"Speak to me, my soldier," said Alexius, strongly affected by the gratitude which he felt was due to Hereward upon so singular an occasion, "speak to thine Emperor as his superior, for such thou art at this moment, and tell him if there is any manner, even at the expense of half his kingdom, to atone for his own life saved, and what is yet dearer, for the honour of his country, which thou hast so manfully defended and preserved?"

"My lord," answered Hereward, "your Imperial Highness values my poor services over highly, and ought to attribute them to the noble Count of Paris, first, for his condescending to accept of an antagonist so mean in quality as myself; and next, in generously relinquishing victory when he might have achieved it by an additional blow; for I here confess before your Majesty, my brethren, and the assembled Grecians, that my power of protracting the combat was ended, when the gallant Count, by his generosity, put a stop to it."

"Do not thyself that wrong, brave man," said Count Robert; "for I vow to Our Lady of the Broken Lances, that the combat was yet within the undetermined doom of Providence, when the pressure of my own feelings rendered me incapable of continuing it, to the necessary harm, perhaps to the mortal damage, of an antagonist to whom I owe so much kindness. Choose, therefore, the recompense which the generosity of thy Emperor offers in a manner so just and grateful, and fear not lest mortal voice pronounces that reward unmerited which Robert of Paris shall avouch with his sword to have been gallantly won upon his own crest."

"You are too great, my lord, and too noble," answered the Anglo-Saxon, "to be gainsaid by such as I am, and I must not awaken new strife between us by contesting the circumstances under which our combat so suddenly closed, nor would it be wise or prudent in me further to contradict you. My noble Emperor generously offers me the right of naming what he calls my recompense; but let not his generosity be dispraised, although it is from you, my lord, and not from his Imperial Highness, that I am to ask a boon, to me the dearest to which my voice can give utterance."

"And that," said the Count, "has reference to Bertha, the faithful attendant of my wife?"

"Even so," said Hereward; "it is my proposal to request my discharge from the Varangian guard, and permission to share in your lordship's pious and honourable vow for the recovery of Palestine, with liberty to fight under your honoured banner, and permis-

sion from time to time to recommend my love-suit to Bertha, the attendant of the Countess of Paris, and the hope that it may find favour in the eyes of her noble lord and lady. I may thus finally hope to be restored to a country, which I have never ceased to love over the rest of the world."

"Thy service, noble soldier," said the Count, "shall be as acceptable to me as that of a born earl; nor is there an opportunity of acquiring honour which I can shape for thee, to which, as it occurs, I will not gladly prefer thee. I will not boast of what interest I have with the King of England, but something I can do with him, and it shall be strained to the uttermost to settle thee in thine own beloved native country."

The Emperor then spoke. "Bear witness, Heaven and earth, and you my faithful subjects, and you my gallant allies; above all, you my bold and true Varangian Guard, that we would rather have lost the brightest jewel from our Imperial crown, than have relinquished the service of this true and faithful Anglo-Saxon. But since go he must and will, it shall be my study to distinguish him by such marks of beneficence as may make it known through his future life, that he is the person to whom the Emperor Alexius Comnenus acknowledged a debt larger than his empire could discharge. You, my Lord Tancred, and your principal leaders, will sup with us this evening, and to-morrow resume your honourable and religious purpose of pilgrimage. We trust both the combatants will also oblige us by their presence.—Trumpets, give the signal for dismission."

The trumpets sounded accordingly, and the different classes of spectators, armed and unarmed, broke up into various parties, or formed into their military ranks, for the purpose of their return to the city.

The screams of women suddenly and strangely raised, was the first thing that arrested the departure of the multitude, when those who glanced their eyes back, saw Sylvan, the great ourang-outang, produce himself in the lists, to their surprise and astonishment. The women, and many of the men who were present, unaccustomed to the ghastly look and savage appearance of a creature so extraordinary, raised a yell of terror so loud, that it discomposed the animal who was the occasion of its being raised. Sylvan, in the course of the night, having escaped over the garden-wall of Agelastes, and clambered over the rampart of the city, found no difficulty in hiding himself in the lists which were in the act of being raised, having found a lurking-place in some dark corner under the seats of the spectators. From this he was probably dislodged by the tumult of the dispersing multitude, and had been compelled, therefore, to make an appearance in public when he least desired it, not unlike that of the celebrated Puliccinello, at the conclusion of his own drama, when he enters in mortal strife with the foul fiend himself, a scene which scarcely excites more terror among the juvenile audience, than did the unexpected apparition of Sylvan among the spectators of the duel. Bows were bent, and javelins pointed by the braver part of the soldiery, against an animal of an appearance so ambiguous, and whom his un-

common size and grizzly look caused most who beheld him to suppose either the devil himself, or the apparition of some fiendish deity of ancient days, whom the heathens worshipped. Sylvan had so far improved such opportunities as had been afforded him, as to become sufficiently aware that the attitudes assumed by so many military men, inferred immediate danger to his person, from which he hastened to shelter himself by flying to the protection of Hereward, with whom he had been in some degree familiarized. He seized him, accordingly, by the cloak, and, by the absurd and alarmed look of his fantastic features, and a certain wild and gibbering chatter, endeavoured to express his fear and to ask protection. Hereward understood the terrified creature, and turning to the Emperor's throne, said aloud,—"Poor frightened being, turn thy petition, and gestures, and tones, to a quarter which, having to-day pardoned so many offences which were wilfully and maliciously schemed, will not be, I am sure, obdurate to such as thou, in thy half-reasoning capacity, mayst have been capable of committing."

The creature, as is the nature of its tribe, caught from Hereward himself the mode of applying with most effect his gestures and pitiable supplication, while the Emperor, notwithstanding the serious scene which had just past, could not help laughing at the touch of comedy flung into it by this last incident.

"My trusty Hereward,"—he said aside, "(I will not again call him Edward if I can help it)—thou

art the refuge of the distressed, whether it be man or beast, and nothing that sues through thy intercession, while thou remainest in our service, shall find its supplication in vain. Do thou, good Hereward," for the name was now pretty well established in his Imperial memory, "and such of thy companions as know the habits of the creature, lead him back to his old quarters in the Blacquernal; and that done, my friend, observe that we request thy company, and that of thy faithful mate Bertha, to partake supper at our court, with our wife and daughter, and such of our servants and allies as we shall request to share the same honour. Be assured, that while thou remainest with us, there is no point of dignity which shall not be willingly paid to thee.—And do thou approach, Achilles Tatius, as much favoured by thine Emperor as before this day dawned. What charges are against thee have been only whispered in a friendly ear, which remembers them not, unless (which Heaven forefend!) their remembrance is renewed by fresh offences."

Achilles Tatius bowed till the plume of his helmet mingled with the mane of his fiery horse, but held it wisest to forbear any answer in words, leaving his crime and his pardon to stand upon those general terms in which the Emperor had expressed them.

Once more the multitude of all ranks returned on their way to the city, nor did any second interruption arrest their march. Sylvan, accompanied by one or two Varangians, who led him in a sort of captivity, took his way to the vaults of the Blacquernal, which were in fact his proper habitation.

Upon the road to the city, Harpax, the notorious corporal of the Immortal Guards, held a discourse with one or two of his own soldiers, and of the citizens who had been members of the late conspiracy.

"So," said Stephanos, the prize-fighter, "a fine affair we have made of it, to suffer ourselves to be all anticipated and betrayed by a thick-skulled Varangian; every chance turning against us as they would against Corydon, the shoemaker, if he were to defy me to the circus. Ursel, whose death made so much work, turns out not to be dead after all; and what is worse, he lives not to our advantage. This fellow Hereward, who was yesterday no better than myself—What do I say?—better!—he was a great deal worse—an insignificant nobody in every respect!—is now crammed with honours, praises, and gifts, till he well-nigh returns what they have given him, and the Cæsar and the Acolyte, our associates, have lost the Emperor's love and confidence, and if they are suffered to survive, it must be like the tame domestic poultry, whom we pamper with food one day, that upon the next their necks may be twisted for spit or pot."

"Stephanos," replied the centurion, "thy form of body fits thee well for the Palæstra, but thy mind is not so acutely formed as to detect that which is real from that which is only probable, in the political world, of which thou art now judging. Considering the risk incurred by lending a man's ear to a conspiracy, thou oughtest to reckon it a saving, in every particular, where he escapes with his life and character safe. This has been the case with Achilles

Tatius, and with the Cæsar. They have remained also in their high places of trust and power, and may be confident that the Emperor will hardly dare to remove them at a future period, since the possession of the full knowledge of their guilt has not emboldened him to do so. Their power, thus left with them, is in fact ours; nor is there a circumstance to be supposed, which can induce them to betray their confederates to the government. It is much more likely that they will remember them with the probability of renewing, at a fitter time, the alliance which binds them together. Cheer up thy noble resolution, therefore, my Prince of the Circus, and think that thou shalt still retain that predominant influence which the favourites of the amphitheatre are sure to possess over the citizens of Constantinople."

"I cannot tell," answered Stephanos; "but it gnaws at my heart like the worm that dieth not, to see this beggarly foreigner betray the noblest blood in the land, not to mention the best athlete in the Palæstra, and move off not only without punishment for his treachery, but with praise, honour, and preferment."

"True," said Harpax; "but, observe, my friend, that he does move off to purpose. He leaves the land, quits the corps in which he might claim preferment and a few vain honours, being valued at what such trifles amount to. Hereward, in the course of one or two days, shall be little better than a disbanded soldier, subsisting by the poor bread which he can obtain as a follower of this beggarly Count, or which he is rather bound to dispute with the in-

fidel, by encountering with his battle-axe the Turkish sabres. What will it avail him amidst the disasters, the slaughter, and the famine of Palestine, that he once upon a time was admitted to supper with the Emperor? We know Alexius Comnenus—he is willing to discharge, at the highest cost, such obligations as are incurred to men like this Hereward; and, believe me, I think that I see the wily despot shrug his shoulders in derision, when one morning he is saluted with the news of a battle in Palestine lost by the crusaders in which his old acquaintance has fallen a dead man. I will not insult thee, by telling thee how easy it might be to acquire the favour of a gentlewoman in waiting upon a lady of quality; nor do I think it would be difficult, should that be the object of the prize-fighter, to acquire the property of a large baboon like Sylvan, which no doubt would set up as a juggler any Frank who had meanness of spirit to propose to gain his bread in such a capacity, from the alms of the starving chivalry of Europe. But he who can stoop to envy the lot of such a person, ought not to be one whose chief personal distinctions are sufficient to place him first in rank over all the favourites of the amphitheatre."

There was something in this sophistical kind of reasoning which was but half satisfactory to the obtuse intellect of the prize-fighter, to whom it was addressed, although the only answer which he attempted was couched in this observation:—

"Ay, but, noble centurion, you forget that, besides empty honours, this Varangian Hereward, or

Edward, whichever is his name, is promised a mighty donative of gold."

"Marry, you touch me there," said the centurion; "and when you tell me that the promise is fulfilled, I will willingly agree that the Anglo-Saxon hath gained something to be envied for; but while it remains in the shape of a naked promise, you shall pardon me, my worthy Stephanos, if I hold it of no more account than the mere pledges which are distributed among ourselves as well as to the Varangians, promising upon future occasions mints of money, which we are likely to receive at the same time with the last year's snow. Keep up your heart, therefore, noble Stephanos, and believe not that your affairs are worse for the miscarriage of this day; and let not thy gallant courage sink, but remembering those principles upon which it was called into action, believe that thy objects are not the less secure because fate has removed their acquisition to a more distant day." The veteran and unbending conspirator, Harpax, thus strengthened for some future renewal of their enterprise the falling spirits of Stephanos.

After this, such leaders as were included in the invitation given by the Emperor, repaired to the evening meal, and, from the general content and complaisance expressed by Alexius and his guests of every description, it could little have been supposed that the day just passed over was one which had inferred a purpose so dangerous and treacherous.

The absence of the Countess Brenhilda, during this eventful day, created no small surprise to the

Emperor and those in his immediate confidence, who knew her enterprising spirit, and the interest she must have felt in the issue of the combat. Bertha had made an early communication to the Count, that his lady, agitated with the many anxieties of the few preceding days, was unable to leave her apartment. The valiant knight, therefore, lost no time in acquainting his faithful Countess of his safety; and afterwards joining those who partook of the banquet at the palace, he bore himself as if the least recollection did not remain on his mind of the perfidious conduct of the Emperor at the conclusion of the last entertainment. He knew, in truth, that the knights of Prince Tancred not only maintained a strict watch round the house where Brenhilda remained, but also that they preserved a severe ward in the neighbourhood of the Blacquernal, as well for the safety of their heroic leader, as for that of Count Robert, the respected companion of their military pilgrimage.

It was the general principle of the European chivalry, that distrust was rarely permitted to survive open quarrels, and that whatever was forgiven, was dismissed from their recollection, as unlikely to recur; but on the present occasion there was a more than usual assemblage of troops, which the occurrences of the day had drawn together, so that the crusaders were called upon to be particularly watchful.

It may be believed that the evening passed over without any attempt to renew the ceremonial in the council chamber of the Lions, which had been upon

a former occasion terminated in such misunderstanding. Indeed it would have been lucky if the explanation between the mighty Emperor of Greece and the chivalrous Knight of Paris had taken place earlier; for reflection on what had passed, had convinced the Emperor that the Franks were not a people to be imposed upon by pieces of clockwork, and similar trifles, and that what they did not understand, was sure, instead of procuring their awe or admiration, to excite their anger and defiance. Nor had it altogether escaped Count Robert, that the manners of the Eastern people were upon a different scale from those to which he had been accustomed; that they neither were so deeply affected by the spirit of chivalry, nor, in his own language, was the worship of the Lady of the Broken Lances so congenial a subject of adoration. This notwithstanding, Count Robert observed, that Alexius Comnenus was a wise and politic prince; his wisdom perhaps too much allied to cunning, but yet aiding him to maintain with great address that empire over the minds of his subjects, which was necessary for their good, and for maintaining his own authority. He therefore resolved to receive with equanimity whatever should be offered by the Emperor, either in civility or in the way of jest, and not again to disturb an understanding which might be of advantage to Christendom, by a quarrel founded upon misconception of terms or misapprehension of manners. To this prudent resolution the Count of Paris adhered during the whole evening; with some difficulty, however, since it was somewhat inconsistent with his

own fiery and inquisitive temper, which was equally desirous to know the precise amount of whatever was addressed to him, and to take umbrage at it, should it appear in the least degree offensive, whether so intended or not.

CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FOURTH.

It was not until after the conquest of Jerusalem that Count Robert of Paris returned to Constantinople, and with his wife, and such proportion of his followers as the sword and pestilence had left after that bloody warfare, resumed his course to his native kingdom. Upon reaching Italy, the first care of the noble Count and Countess was to celebrate in princely style the marriage of Hereward and his faithful Bertha, who had added to their other claims upon their master and mistress, those acquired by Hereward's faithful services in Palestine, and no less by Bertha's affectionate ministry to her lady in Constantinople.

As to the fate of Alexius Comnenus, it may be read at large in the history of his daughter Anna, who has represented him as the hero of many a victory, achieved, says the purple-born, in the third chapter and fifteenth book of her history, sometimes by his arms and sometimes by his prudence. "His boldness alone has gained some battles, at other times his success has been won by stratagem. He has erected the most illustrious of his trophies by confronting danger, by combating like a simple soldier, and throwing himself bareheaded into the thickest of the foe. But there are others," continues the accomplished lady, "which he gained an op-

portunity of erecting by assuming the appearance of terror, and even of retreat. In a word, he knew alike how to triumph either in flight or in pursuit, and remained upright even before those enemies who appeared to have struck him down; resembling the military implement termed the calthrop, which remains always upright in whatever direction it is thrown on the ground."

It would be unjust to deprive the Princess of the defence she herself makes against the obvious charge of partiality.

"I must still once more repel the reproach which some bring against me, as if my history was composed merely according to the dictates of the natural love for parents which is engraved in the hearts of children. In truth, it is not the effect of that affection which I bear to mine, but it is the evidence of matter of fact, which obliges me to speak as I have done. Is it not possible that one can have at the same time an affection for the memory of a father and for truth? For myself, I have never directed my attempt to write history, otherwise than for the ascertainment of the matter of fact. With this purpose, I have taken for my subject the history of a worthy man. Is it just, that, by the single accident of his being the author of my birth, his quality of my father ought to form a prejudice against me, which would ruin my credit with my readers? I have given, upon other occasions, proofs sufficiently strong of the ardour which I had for the defence of my father's interests, which those that know me can never doubt; but, on the present, I have been lim-

ited by the inviolable fidelity with which I respect the truth, which I should have felt conscience to have veiled, under pretence of serving the renown of my father."—*Alexiad*, chap. iii. book xv.

This much we have deemed it our duty to quote, in justice to the fair historian; we will extract also her description of the Emperor's death, and are not unwilling to allow, that the character assigned to the Princess by our own Gibbon, has in it a great deal of fairness and of truth.

Notwithstanding her repeated protests of sacrificing rather to the exact and absolute truth than to the memory of her deceased parent, Gibbon remarks truly, that "instead of the simplicity of style and narrative which wins a belief, an elaborate affectation of rhetoric and science betrays in every page the vanity of a female author. The genuine character of Alexius is lost in a vague constellation of virtues; and the perpetual strain of panegyric and apology awakens our jealousy to question the veracity of the historian, and the merit of the hero. We cannot, however, refute her judicious and important remark, that the disorders of the times were the misfortune and the glory of Alexius; and that every calamity which can afflict a declining empire was accumulated on his reign by the justice of Heaven and the vices of his predecessors."— GIBBON'S *Roman Empire*, vol. ix. p. 83, foot-note.

The Princess accordingly feels the utmost assurance, that a number of signs which appeared in Heaven and on earth, were interpreted by the soothsayers of the day as foreboding the death of the

Emperor. By these means, Anna Comnena assigned to her father those indications of consequence, which ancient historians represent as necessary intimations of the sympathy of nature, with the removal of great characters from the world; but she fails not to inform the Christian reader that her father's belief attached to none of these prognostics, and that even on the following remarkable occasion he maintained his incredulity:—A splendid statue, supposed generally to be a relic of paganism, holding in its hand a golden sceptre, and standing upon a base of porphyry, was overturned by a tempest, and was generally believed to be an intimation of the death of the Emperor. This, however, he generously repelled. Phidias, he said, and other great sculptors of antiquity, had the talent of imitating the human frame with surprising accuracy; but to suppose that the power of foretelling future events was reposed in these master-pieces of art, would be to ascribe to their makers the faculties reserved by the Deity for himself, when he says, "It is I who kill and make alive." During his latter days, the Emperor was greatly afflicted with the gout, the nature of which has exercised the wit of many persons of science as well as of Anna Comnena. The poor patient was so much exhausted, that when the Empress was talking of most eloquent persons who should assist in the composition of his history, he said, with a natural contempt of such vanities, "The passages of my unhappy life call rather for tears and lamentation than for the praises you speak of."

A species of asthma having come to the assistance

of the gout, the remedies of the physicians became as vain as the intercession of the monks and clergy, as well as the alms which were indiscriminately lavished. Two or three deep successive swoons gave ominous warning of the approaching blow; and at length was terminated the reign and life of Alexius Comnenus, a prince who, with all the faults which may be imputed to him, still possesses a real right, from the purity of his general intentions, to be accounted one of the best sovereigns of the Lower Empire.

For some time, the historian forgot her pride of literary rank, and, like an ordinary person, burst into tears and shrieks, tore her hair, and defaced her countenance, while the Empress Irene cast from her her princely habits, cut off her hair, changed her purple buskins for black mourning shoes, and her daughter Mary, who had herself been a widow, took a black robe from one of her own wardrobes, and presented it to her mother. "Even in the moment when she put it on," says Anna Comnena, "the Emperor gave up the ghost, and in that moment the sun of my life set."

We shall not pursue her lamentations farther. She upbraids herself that, after the death of her father, that light of the world, she had also survived Irene, the delight alike of the east and of the west, and survived her husband also. "I am indignant," she said, "that my soul, suffering under such torrents of misfortune, should still deign to animate my body. Have I not," said she, "been more hard and unfeeling than the rocks themselves; and is it not just that

one, who could survive such a father and mother, and such a husband, should be subjected to the influence of so much calamity? But let me finish this history, rather than any longer fatigue my readers with my unavailing and tragical lamentation."

Having thus concluded her history, she adds the following two lines:—

> "The learned Comnena lays her pen aside,
> What time her subject and her father died." *

These quotations will probably give the readers as much as they wish to know of the real character of this Imperial historian. Fewer words will suffice to dispose of the other parties who have been selected from her pages, as persons in the foregoing drama.

There is very little doubt that the Count Robert of Paris, whose audacity in seating himself upon the throne of the Emperor gives a peculiar interest to his character, was in fact a person of the highest rank; being no other, as has been conjectured by the learned Du Cange, than an ancestor of the house of Bourbon, which has so long given kings to France. He was a successor, it has been conceived, of the Counts of Paris, by whom the city was valiantly defended against the Normans, and an ancestor of Hugh Capet. There are several hypotheses upon this subject, deriving the well-known Hugh Capet, first, from the family of Saxony; secondly, from Saint Arnoul, afterwards Bishop of Altex; third, from Nibilong; fourth, from the Duke of Bavaria; and

* [*Ληξεν ὁπου βιοτοιο Αλεξιος ὁ Κομνηνος*
Ενθα καλη Θυγατηρ ληξεν Αλεξιαδος.]

fifth, from a natural son of the Emperor Charlemagne. Variously placed, but in each of these contested pedigrees, appears this Robert, surnamed the *Strong*, who was Count of that district, of which Paris was the capital, most peculiarly styled the County, or Isle of France. Anna Comnena, who has recorded the bold usurpation of the Emperor's seat by this haughty chieftain, has also acquainted us with his receiving a severe, if not a mortal wound, at the battle of Dorylæum, owing to his neglecting the warlike instructions with which her father had favoured him on the subject of the Turkish wars. The antiquary who is disposed to investigate this subject, may consult the late Lord Ashburnham's elaborate Genealogy of the Royal House of France; also a note of Du Cange's on the Princess's history, p. 362, arguing for the identity of her "Robert of Paris, a haughty barbarian," with the "Robert called the Strong," mentioned as an ancestor of Hugh Capet. Gibbon, vol. xi. p. 52, may also be consulted. The French antiquary and the English historian seem alike disposed to find the church, called in the tale that of the Lady of the Broken Lances, in that dedicated to Saint Drusas, or Drosin of Soissons, who was supposed to have peculiar influence on the issue of combats, and to be in the habit of determining them in favour of such champions as spent the night preceding at his shrine.

In consideration of the sex of one of the parties concerned, the author has selected Our Lady of the Broken Lances as a more appropriate patroness than Saint Drusas himself, for the Amazons, who were not

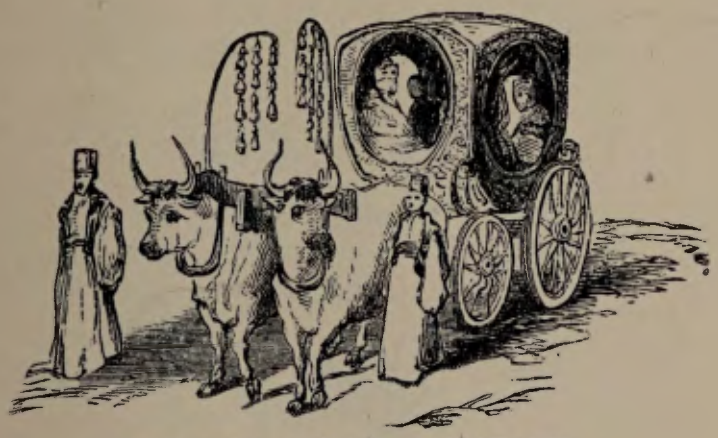
uncommon in that age. Gaita, for example, the wife of Robert Guiscard, a redoubted hero, and the parent of a most heroic race of sons, was herself an Amazon, fought in the foremost ranks of the Normans, and is repeatedly commemorated by our Imperial historian, Anna Comnena.

The reader can easily conceive to himself that Robert of Paris distinguished himself among his brethren-at-arms and fellow-crusaders. His fame resounded from the walls of Antioch; but at the battle of Dorylæum, he was so desperately wounded, as to be disabled from taking a part in the grandest scene of the expedition. His heroic Countess, however, enjoyed the great satisfaction of mounting the walls of Jerusalem, and in so far discharging her own vows and those of her husband. This was the more fortunate, as the sentence of the physicians pronounced that the wounds of the Count had been inflicted by a poisoned weapon, and that complete recovery was only to be hoped for by having recourse to his native air. After some time spent in the vain hope of averting by patience this unpleasant alternative, Count Robert subjected himself to necessity, or what was represented as such, and, with his wife and the faithful Hereward, and all others of his followers who had been like himself disabled from combat, took the way to Europe by sea.

A light galley, procured at a high rate, conducted them safely to Venice, and from that then glorious city, the moderate portion of spoil which had fallen to the Count's share among the conquerors of Palestine, served to convey them to his own dominions,

which, more fortunate than those of most of his fellow-pilgrims, had been left uninjured by their neighbours during the time of their proprietor's absence on the Crusade. The report that the Count had lost his health, and the power of continuing his homage to the Lady of the Broken Lances, brought upon him the hostilities of one or two ambitious or envious neighbours, whose covetousness was, however, sufficiently repressed by the brave resistance of the Countess and the resolute Hereward. Less than a twelvemonth was required to restore the Count of Paris to his full health, and to render him, as formerly, the assured protector of his own vassals, and the subject in whom the possessors of the French throne reposed the utmost confidence. This latter capacity enabled Count Robert to discharge his debt towards Hereward in a manner as ample as he could have hoped or expected. Being now respected alike for his wisdom and his sagacity, as much as he always was for his intrepidity and his character as a successful crusader, he was repeatedly employed by the Court of France in settling the troublesome and intricate affairs in which the Norman possessions of the English crown involved the rival nations. William Rufus was not insensible to his merit, nor blind to the importance of gaining his good-will; and finding out his anxiety that Hereward should be restored to the land of his fathers, he took, or made an opportunity, by the forfeiture of some rebellious noble, of conferring upon our Varangian a large district adjacent to the New Forest, being part of the scenes which his father chiefly frequented, and where

it is said the descendants of the valiant squire and his Bertha have subsisted for many a long year, surviving turns of time and chance, which are in general fatal to the continuance of more distinguished families.



TURKISH LADY'S CARRIAGE.

THE WAVERLEY NOVELS

CASTLE DANGEROUS

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

VOL. I.

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
1900

TOWER OF OLD DOUGLAS CASTLE.

CASTLE DANGEROUS.

As I stood by yon roofless tower,
  Where the wa'flower scents the dewy air,
Where the howlet mourns in her ivy bower,
  And tells the midnight moon her care:

The winds were laid, the air was still,
  The stars they shot along the sky;
The fox was howling on the hill,
  And the distant echoing glens reply.

ROBERT BURNS.

INTRODUCTION—(1832.)

[The following Introduction to "Castle Dangerous" was forwarded by Sir Walter Scott from Naples in February, 1832, together with some corrections of the text, and notes on localities mentioned in the Novel.

The materials for the Introduction must have been collected before he left Scotland in September, 1831; but in the hurry of preparing for his voyage, he had not been able to arrange them so as to accompany the first edition of this Romance.

A few notes, supplied by the Editor, are placed within brackets.]

THE incidents on which the ensuing Novel mainly turns, are derived from the ancient Metrical Chronicle of "The Bruce," by Archdeacon Barbour, and from the "History of the Houses of Douglas and Angus," by David Hume of Godscroft; and are sustained by the immemorial tradition of the western parts of Scotland. They are so much in consonance with the spirit and manners of the troubled age to which they are referred, that I can see no reason for doubting their being founded in fact; the names, indeed, of numberless localities in the vicinity of Douglas Castle, appear to attest, beyond suspicion, many even of the smallest circumstances embraced in the story of Godscroft.

Among all the associates of Robert the Bruce, in his great enterprise of rescuing Scotland from the power of Edward, the first place is universally conceded to James, the eighth Lord Douglas, to this day venerated by his countrymen as the "Good Sir James:"

> "The Gud Schyr James of Douglas,
> That in his time sa worthy was,
> That off his price and his bounté,
> In far landis renownyt was he."
>
> BARBOUR.

"The Good Sir James, the dreadful blacke Douglas,
That in his dayes so wise and worthie was,
Wha here, and on the infidels of Spain,
Such honour, praise, and triumphs did obtain."

GORDON.

From the time when the King of England refused to reinstate him, on his return from France, where he had received the education of chivalry, in the extensive possessions of his family,—which had been held forfeited by the exertions of his father, William the Hardy—the young knight of Douglas appears to have embraced the cause of Bruce with enthusiastic ardour, and to have adhered to the fortunes of his sovereign with unwearied fidelity and devotion. "The Douglasse," says Hollinshed, "was right joyfully received of King Robert, in whose service he faithfully continued, both in peace and war, to his life's end. Though the surname and familie of the Douglasses was in some estimation of nobilitie before those daies, yet the rising thereof to honour chanced through this James Douglasse; for, by meanes of his advancement, others of that lineage tooke occasion by their singular manhood and noble prowess, shewed at sundrie times in defence of the realme, to grow to such height in authoritie and estimation, that their mightie puissance in mainrent,* lands, and great possessions, at length was (through suspicion conceived by the kings that succeeded) the cause in part of their ruinous decay."

In every narrative of the Scottish war of independence, a considerable space is devoted to those years

* Vassalage.

of perilous adventure and suffering which were spent by the illustrious friend of Bruce, in harassing the English detachments successively occupying his paternal territory, and in repeated and successful attempts to wrest the formidable fortress of Douglas Castle itself from their possession. In the English, as well as Scotch Chronicles, and in Rymer's Fœdera, occur frequent notices of the different officers entrusted by Edward with the keeping of this renowned stronghold; especially Sir Robert de Clifford, ancestor of the heroic race of the Cliffords, Earls of Cumberland; his lieutenant, Sir Richard de Thurlewalle, (written sometimes Thruswall,) of Thirwall Castle, on the Tippal, in Northumberland; and Sir John de Walton, the romantic story of whose love-pledge, to hold the Castle of Douglas for a year and day, or surrender all hope of obtaining his mistress's favour, with the tragic consequences, softened in the Novel, is given at length in Godscroft, and has often been pointed out as one of the affecting passages in the chronicles of chivalry.*

The Author, before he had made much progress in this, probably the last of his Novels, undertook a journey to Douglasdale, for the purpose of examining the remains of the famous Castle, the Kirk of Saint Bride of Douglas, the patron saint of that great family, and the various localities alluded to by Godscroft, in his account of the early adventures of Good Sir James; but though he was fortunate enough to

* [The reader will find both this story, and that of Robert of Paris, in Sir W. Scott's Essay on Chivalry, published in 1818, in the Supplement to the Encylopædia Britannica.—*E.*]

find a zealous and well-informed *cicerone* in Mr. Thomas Haddow, and had every assistance from the kindness of Mr. Alexander Finlay, the resident Chamberlain of his friend, Lord Douglas, the state of his health at the time was so feeble, that he found himself incapable of pursuing his researches, as in better days he would have delighted to do, and was obliged to be contented with such a cursory view of scenes, in themselves most interesting, as could be snatched in a single morning, when any bodily exertion was painful. Mr. Haddow was attentive enough to forward subsequently some notes on the points which the Author had seemed desirous of investigating; but these did not reach him until, being obliged to prepare matters for a foreign excursion in quest of health and strength, he had been compelled to bring his work, such as it is, to a conclusion.

The remains of the old Castle of Douglas are inconsiderable. They consist indeed of but one ruined tower, standing at a short distance from the modern mansion, which itself is only a fragment of the design on which the Duke of Douglas meant to reconstruct the edifice, after its last accidental destruction by fire.* His Grace had kept in view the ancient

* [The following notice of Douglas Castle, etc., is from the Description of the Sheriffdom of Lanark, by William Hamilton of Wishaw, written in the beginning of the last century, and printed by the Maitland Club of Glasgow in 1831 :—

"Douglass parish, and baronie and lordship, heth very long appertained to the family of Douglass, and continued with the Earles of Douglass untill their fatall forfeiture, anno 1455; during which tyme there are many noble and important actions re-

DRYBURGH ABBEY : BURIAL PLACE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

prophecy, that as often as Douglas Castle might be destroyed, it should rise again in enlarged dimensions and improved splendour, and projected a pile of building, which, if it had been completed, would have much exceeded any nobleman's residence then existing in Scotland—as, indeed, what has been finished, amounting to about one-eighth part of the plan, is sufficiently extensive for the accommodation of a large establishment, and contains some apartments the dimensions of which are magnificent. The situation is commanding; and though the Duke's successors have allowed the mansion to continue as he left it, great expense has been lavished on the environs,

corded in histories performed by them, by the lords and earls of that great family. It was thereafter given to Douglass, Earle of Anguse, and continued with them untill William, Earle of Anguse, was created Marquess of Douglass, anno 1633; and is now the principal seat of the Marquess of Douglass his family. It is a large baronie and parish, and ane laick patronage; and the Marquess is both titular and patron. He heth there, near to the church, a very considerable great house, called the Castle of Douglas; and near the church is a fyne village, called the town of Douglass, long since erected in a burgh of baronie. It heth ane handsome church, with many ancient monuments and inscriptions on the old interments of the Earles of this place.

"The water of Douglass runs quyte through the whole length of this parish, and upon either side of the water it is called Douglasdale. It toucheth Clyde towards the north, and is bounded by Lesmahagow to the west, Kyle to the south-west, Crawford John and Carmichaell to the south and south-east. It is a pleasant strath, plentifull in grass and corn, and coal; and the minister is well provided.

"The lands of Heysleside, belonging to Samuel Douglass, has a good house and pleasant seat, close by a wood," etc.—p. 65.]

which now present a vast sweep of richly undulated woodland, stretching to the borders of the Cairntable mountains, repeatedly mentioned as the favourite retreat of the great ancestor of the family in the days of his hardship and persecution. There remains at the head of the adjoining *bourg*, the choir of the ancient church of Saint Bride, having beneath it the vault which was used till lately as the burial-place of this princely race, and only abandoned when their stone and leaden coffins had accumulated, in the course of five or six hundred years, in such a way that it could accommodate no more. Here a silver case, containing the dust of what was once the brave heart of Good Sir James, is still pointed out; and in the dilapidated choir above appears, though in a sorely ruinous state, the once magnificent tomb of the warrior himself. After detailing the well-known circumstances of Sir James's death in Spain, 20th August, 1330, where he fell, assisting the King of Arragon in an expedition against the Moors, when on his way from Scotland to Jerusalem, to which he was conveying the heart of Bruce,—the old poet Barbour tells us that—

"Quhen his men lang had mad murnyn,
Thai debowalyt him, and syne
Gert scher him swa, that mycht be tane
The flesch all haly fra the bane,
And the carioune thar in haly place
Erdyt, with rycht gret worschip, was.

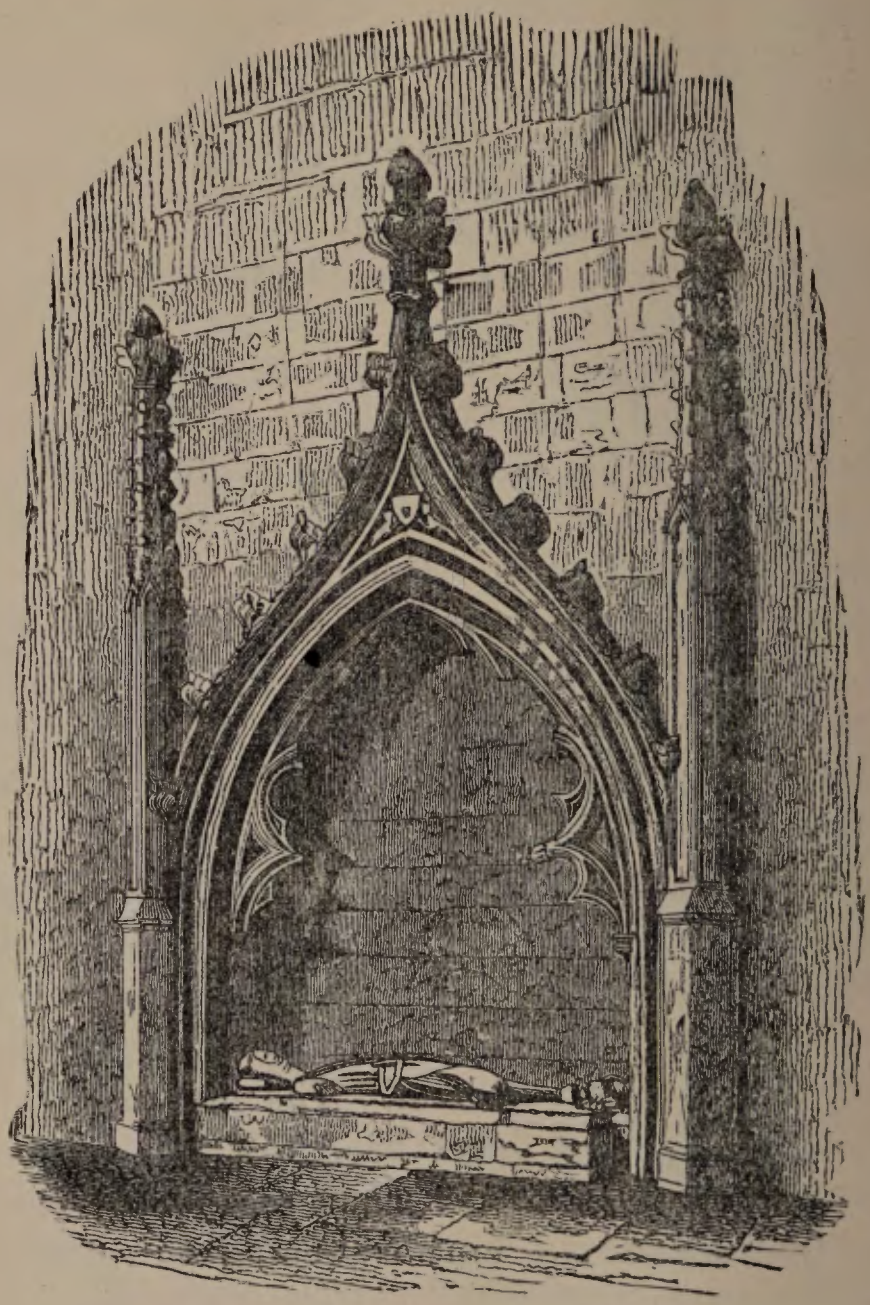
"The banys haue thai with them tane;
And syne ar to thair schippis gane;

Syne towart Scotland held thair way,
And thar ar cummyn in full gret hy,
And the banys honorabilly.

"In till the Kyrk of Douglas war
Erdyt, with dule and mekill car.
Schyr Archebald his sone gert svn
Off alabastre, bath fair and fyne,
Ordane a tumbe sa richly
As it behowyt to swa worthy."

The monument is supposed to have been wantonly mutilated and defaced by a detachment of Cromwell's troops, who, as was their custom, converted the kirk of Saint Bride of Douglas into a stable for their horses. Enough, however, remains to identify the resting-place of the great Sir James. The effigy, of dark stone, is cross-legged, marking his character as one who had died after performing the pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and in actual conflict with the infidels of Spain; and the introduction of the HEART, adopted as an addition to the old arms of Douglas, in consequence of the knight's fulfilment of Bruce's dying injunction, appears, when taken in connection with the posture of the figure, to set the question at rest. The monument, in its original state, must have been not inferior in any respect to the best of the same period in Westminster Abbey; and the curious reader is referred for farther particulars of it to "The Sepulchral Antiquities of Great Britain, by Edward Blore, F.S.A." London, 4to, 1826; where may also be found interesting details of some of the other tombs and effigies in the cemetery of the first house of Douglas.

As considerable liberties have been taken with the historical incidents on which this novel is founded,



SIR JAMES DOUGLAS'S MONUMENT.

it is due to the reader to place before him such extracts from Godscroft and Barbour as may enable him to correct any mis-impression. The passages

introduced in the Appendix, from the ancient poem of "The Bruce," will moreover gratify those who have not in their possession a copy of the text of Barbour, as given in the valuable quarto edition of my learned friend Dr. Jamieson, as furnishing on the whole a favourable specimen of the style and manner of a venerable classic, who wrote when Scotland was still full of the fame and glory of her liberators from the yoke of Plantagenet, and especially of Sir James Douglas, "of whom," says Godscroft, "we will not omit here, (to shut up all,) the judgment of those times concerning him, in a rude verse indeed, yet such as beareth witness of his true magnanimity and invincible mind in either fortune:—

"Good Sir James Douglas (who wise, and wight, and worthy was),
Was never over glad in no winning, nor yet oversad for no tineing;
Good fortune and evil chance he weighed both in one balance."

W. S.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

EXTRACTS FROM "THE HISTORY OF THE HOUSES OF DOUGLAS AND ANGUS. BY MASTER DAVID HUME OF GODSCROFT." *Folio Edit.*

* * * And here indeed the course of the King's misfortunes begins to make some halt and stay by thus much prosperous successe in his own person; but more in the person of Sir James, by the reconquests of his owne castles and countries. From hence he went into Douglasdale, where, by the means of his father's old servant, Thomas Dickson, he took in the Castle of Douglas, and not being able to keep it, he caused burn it, contenting himself with this, that his enemies had one strength fewer in that country than before. The manner of his taking of it is said to have beene thus:—Sir James taking only with him two of his servants, went to Thomas Dickson, of whom he was received with tears, after he had revealed himself to him, for the good old man knew him not at first, being in mean and homely apparel. There he kept him secretly in a quiet chamber, and brought unto him such as had been trusty servants to his father, not all at once, but apart by one and one, for fear of discoverie. Their advice was, that on Palm Sunday, when the English would come forth to the

church, and his partners were conveened, that then he should give the word, and cry the Douglas slogan, and presently set upon them that should happen to be there, who being dispatched, the Castle might be taken easily. This being concluded, and they come, so soon as the English were entered into the church with palms in their hands, (according to the custome of that day,) little suspecting or fearing any such thing, Sir James, according to their appointment, cryed too soon (a Douglas, a Douglas!) which being heard in the church, (this was Saint Bride's church of Douglas,) Thomas Dickson, supposing he had beene hard at hand, drew out his sword, and ran upon them, having none to second him but another man, so that, oppressed by the number of his enemies, he was beaten down and slaine. In the meantime, Sir James being come, the English that were in the chancel kept off the Scots, and having the advantage of the strait and narrow entrie, defended themselves manfully. But Sir James encouraging his men, not so much by words as by deeds and good example, and having slain the boldest resisters, prevailed at last, and entering the place, slew some twenty-six of their number, and took the rest, about ten or twelve persons, intending by them to get the Castle upon composition, or to enter with them when the gates should be opened to let them in: but it needed not, for they of the Castle were so secure, that there was none left to keep it save the porter and the cooke, who knowing nothing of what had hapned at the church, which stood a large quarter of a mile from thence, had left the gate wide open,

the porter standing without, and the cooke dressing the dinner within. They entered without resistance, and meat being ready, and the cloth laid, they shut the gates, and tooke their refection at good leasure.

Now that he had gotten the Castle into his hands, considering with himselfe (as he was a man no lesse advised than valiant) that it was hard for him to keep it, the English being as yet the stronger in that countrey, who if they should besiege him, he knewe of no reliefe, he thought better to carry away such things as be most easily transported, gold, silver, and apparell, with ammunition and armour, whereof he had greatest use and need, and to destroy the rest of the provision, together with the Castle itselfe, then to diminish the number of his followers for a garrison there where it could do no good. And so he caused carrie the meale and malt, and other cornes and graine, into the cellar, and laid altogether in one heape: then he took the prisoners and slew them to revenge the death of his trustie and valiant servant, Thomas Dickson, mingling the victuals with their bloud, and burying their carkasses in the heap of corne: after that he struck out the heads of the barrells and puncheons, and let the drink runn through all; and then he cast the carkasses of dead horses and other carrion amongst it, throwing the salt above all, so to make altogether unuseful to the enemie; and this cellar is called yet the Douglas Lairder. Last of all, he set the house on fire, and burnt all the timber, and what else the fire could overcome, leaving nothing but the scorched walls

behind him. And this seemes to be the first taking of the Castle of Douglas, for it is supposed that he took it twice. For this service, and others done to Lord William, his father, Sir James gave unto Thomas Dickson the lands of Hisleside, which hath beene given him before the castle was taken as an encouragement to whet him on, and not after, for he was slain in the church; which was both liberally and wisely done of him, thus to hearten and draw men to his service by such a noble beginning. The Castle being burnt, Sir James retired, and parting his men into divers companies, so as they might be most secret, he caused cure such as were wounded in the fight, and he himselfe kept as close as he could, waiting ever for an occasion to enterprise something against the enemie. So soone as he was gone, the Lord Clifford being advertised of what had happened, came himselfe in person to Douglas, and caused re-edifie and repair the Castle in a very short time, unto which he also added a Tower, which is yet called Harries Tower from him, and so returned into England, leaving one Thurswall to be Captain thereof.—pp. 26–28.

* * * * * * *

He (Sir James Douglas) getting him again into Douglasdale, did use this stratagem against Thurswall, Captain of the Castle, under the said Lord Clifford. He caused some of his folk drive away the cattle that fed near unto the Castle, and when the Captain of the garrison followed to rescue, gave orders to his men to leave them and to flee away.

Thus he did often to make the Captain slight such frays, and to make him secure, that he might not suspect any further end to be on it; which when he had wrought sufficiently (as he thought), he laid some men in ambuscado, and sent others away to drive such beasts as they should find in the view of the Castle, as if they had been thieves and robbers, as they had done often before. The Captain hearing of it, and supposing there was no greater danger now than had been before, issued forth of the Castle, and followed after them with such haste that his men (running who should be first) were disordered and out of their ranks. The drivers also fled as fast as they could till they had drawn the Captain a little way beyond the place of ambuscado, which when they perceived, rising quickly out of their covert, they set fiercely upon him and his company, and so slew himself and chased his men back to the Castle, some of whom were overtaken and slain, others got into the Castle and so were saved. Sir James, not being able to force the house, took what booty he could get without in the fields, and so departed. By this means, and such other exploits, he so affrighted the enemy, that it was counted a matter of such great jeopardy to keep this Castle, that it began to be called the adventurous (or hazardous) Castle of Douglas: Whereupon Sir John Walton being in suit of an English lady, she wrote to him that when he had kept the adventurous Castle of Douglas seven years, then he might think himself worthy to be a suitor to her. Upon this occasion Walton took upon him the keeping of it, and suc-

ceeded to Thurswall; but he ran the same fortune with the rest that were before him.

For, Sir James having first dressed an ambuscado near unto the place, he made fourteen of his men take so many sacks, and fill them with grass, as though it had been corn, which they carried in the way toward Lanark, the chief market town in that county: so hoping to draw forth the Captain by that bait, and either to take him or the Castle, or both.

Neither was this expectation frustrate, for the Captain did bite, and came forth to have taken this victual (as he supposed). But ere he could reach these carriers, Sir James, with his company, had gotten between the Castle and him; and these disguised carriers, seeing the Captain following after them, did quickly cast off their upper garments, wherein they had masked themselves, and throwing off their sacks, mounted themselves on horseback, and met the Captain with a sharp encounter, he being so much the more amazed that it was unlooked for: wherefore, when he saw these carriers metamorphosed into warriors, and ready to assault him, fearing (that which was) that there was some train laid for them, he turned about to have retired into the Castle; but there also he met with his enemies; between which two companies he and his followers were slain, so that none escaped; the Captain afterwards being searched, they found (as it is reported) his mistress's letters about him. Then he went and took in the Castle, but it is uncertain (say our writers) whether by force or composition; but it seems that the Constable, and those that were within, have

yielded it up without force; in regard that he used them so gently, which he would not have done if he had taken it at utterance. For he sent them all safe home to the Lord Clifford, and gave them also provision and money for their entertainment by the way. The Castle, which he had burnt only before, now he razeth, and cast down the walls thereof to the ground. By these and the like proceedings, within a short while he freed Douglasdale, Attrict Forest, and Jedward Forest, of the English garrisons and subjection.—*Ibid.* p. 29.

No. II.

[Extracts from THE BRUCE. — "Liber compositus per Magistrum Johannem Barber, Archidiaconum Abyrdonensem, de gestis, bellis, et virtutibus, Domini Roberti Brwyss, Regis Scocie illustrissimi, et de conquestu Regni Scocie per eundem, et de Domino Jacobo de Douglas." — Edited by John Jamieson, D.D., F.R.S.F., etc. etc. Edinburgh, 1820.]

Now takis James his waige
Towart Dowglas, his heretage,
With twa yemen, for his owtyn ma;
That wes a symple stuff to ta,
A land or a castell to win.
The quehethir he yarnyt to begyn
Till bring purposs till ending;
For gud help is in gud begynnyng,
For gud begynnyng, and hardy,
Gyff it be folwit wittily,

May ger oftsyss unlikly thing
Cum to full conabill ending.
Swa did it here : but he wes wyss
And saw he mycht, on nakyn wyss,
Werray his fa with evyn mycht ;
Tharfor he thocht to wyrk with slycht.
And in Dowglas daile, his countré,
Upon an evynnyng entryt he.
And than a man wonnyt tharby,
That was off freyndis weill mychty,
And ryche of moble, and off cateill ;
And had bene till his fadyr leyll ;
And till him selff, in his yowthed,
He haid done mony a thankfull deid.
Thom Dicson wes his name perfay.
Till him he send ; and gan him pray,
That he wald cum all anerly
For to spek with him priuely.
And he but daunger till him gais :
Bot fra he tauld him quhat he wais,
He gret for joy, and for pité ;
And him rycht till his houss had he ;
Quhar in a chambre priuely
He held him, and his cumpany,
That nane had off him persaving.
Off mete, and drynk, and othyr thing,
That mycht thaim eyss, thai had plenté.
Sa wrocht he thorow sutelté,
That all the lele men off that land,
That with his fadyr war duelland,
This gud man gert cum, ane and ane,
And mak him man rent euir ilkane ;
And he him selff fyrst homage maid.
Dowglas in part gret glaidschip haid,
That the gud men off his countré
Wald swagate till him bundyn be.
He speryt the conwyne off the land,
And quha the castell had in hand.

And thai him tauld all halily;
And syne amang them priuely
Thai ordanyt, that he still suld be
In hiddillis, and in priweté,
Till Palme Sonday, that wes ner hand,
The thrid day eftyr folowand.
For than the folk off that countré
Assemblyt at the kyrk wald be;
And thai, that in the castell wer,
Wald als be thar, thar palmys to ber,
As folk that had na dreid off ill;
For thai thoucht all wes at thair will.
Than suld he cum with his twa men.
Bot, for that men suld nocht him ken,
He suld ane mantill haiff auld and bar,
And a flaill, as he a thresscher war.
Undyr the mantill nocht for thi
He suld be armyt priuely.
And quhen the men off his countré,
That suld all boune befor him be,
His ensenye mycht her hym cry,
Than suld thai, full enforcely,
Rycht ymyddys the kyrk assaill
The Ingliss men with hard bataill
Swa that nane mycht eschap them fra
For thar throwch trowyt thai to ta
The castell, that besid wes ner.
And quhen this, that I tell you her,
Wes diuisyt, and undertane,
Ilkane till his howss hame is gane;
And held this spek in priueté,
Till the day off thar assembly.

The folk upon the Sonounday
Held to Saynct Bridis kyrk thair way;
And tha that in the castell war
Ischytowt, bath les and mar,

And went thair palmys for to ber;
Owtane a cuk and a porter.
James off Dowglas off thair cummyng,
And quhat thai war, had witting;
And sped him till the kyrk in hy.
Bot or he come, too hastily
Ane off his criyt, "Dowglas! Dowglas!"
Thomas Dicson, that nerrest was
Till thaim that war off the castell,
That war innouth the chancell,
Quhen he "Dowglas!" swa hey herd cry,
Drew owt his swerd; and fellely
Ruschyt amang thaim to and fra.
Bot ane or twa, for owtyn ma,
Than in hy war left lyand
Quhil Dowglas come rycht at hand,
And then enforcyt on thaim the cry.
Bot thai the chansell sturdely
Held, and thaim defendyt wele,
Till off thair men war slayne sumdell.
Bot the Dowglace sa weill him bar,
That all the men, that with him war,
Had comfort off his wele doyng;
And he him sparyt nakyn thing,
Bot provyt swa his force in fycht,
That throw his worschip, and his mycht,
His men sa keynly helpyt than,
That thai the chansell on thaim wan.
Than dang thai on swa hardyly,
That in schort tyme men mycht se ly
The twa part dede, or then deand.
The lave war sesyt sone in hand,
Swa that off thretty levyt nane,
That thai ne war slayne ilkan, or tane.

James off Dowglas, quhen this wes done,
The presoneris has he tane alsone;

And, with thaim off his cumpany,
Towart the castell went in hy,
Or noyiss, or cry, suld ryss.
And for he wald thaim sone suppriss,
That levyt in the castell war,
That war but twa for owtyn mar,
Fyve men or sex befor send he,
That fand all opyn the entré;
And entryt, and the porter tuk
Rycht at the gate, and syne the cuk.
With that Dowglas come to the gat,
And entryt in for owtyn debate;
And fand the mete all redy grathit,
With burdys set, and clathis layit.
The gaitis then he gert sper,
And sat, and eyt all at layser.
Syne all the gudis turssyt thai
That thaim thocht thai mycht haiff away;
And namly wapnys, and armyng,
Siluer, and tresour, and clethyng.
Vyctallis, that mycht nocht tursyt be,
On this maner destroyit he.
All the victalis, owtane salt,
Als quheyt, and flour, and meill, and malt
In the wyne sellar gert he bring;
And samyn on the flur all flyng.
And the presoneris that he had tane
Rycht thar in gert he heid ilkane;
Syne off the townnys he hedis outstrak:
A foule mellé thar gane he mak.
For meile, and malt, and bluid, and wyne,
Ren all to gidder in a mellyne,
That was unsemly for to se.
Tharfor the men of that countré,
For swa fele thar mellyt wer,
Callit it the "Dowglas Lardner."
Syne tuk he salt, as Ic hard tell,
And ded horss, and sordid the well

And brynt all, owtakyn stane;
And is forth, with his menye, gayne
Till his resett; for him thoucht weill,
Giff he had haldyn the castell,
It had bene assegyt raith;
And that him thoucht to mekill waith.
For he ne had hop of reskewyng.
And it is to peralous thing
In castell assegyt to be,
Quhar want is off thir thingis thre;
Victaill, or men with their armyng,
Or than gud hop off rescuyng.
And for he dred thir thingis suld faile,
He chesyt furthwart to trawaill,
Quhar he mycht at his larges be;
And swa dryve furth his destané.

On this wise wes the castell tan,
And slayne that war tharin ilkan.
The Dowglas syne all his menye
Gert in ser placis depertyt be;
For men suld wyt quhar thai war,
That yeid depertyt her and thar.
Thaim that war woundyt gert he ly
In till hiddillis, all priuely;
And gert gud leechis till thaim bring
Quhill that thai war in till heling.
And him selff, with a few menye,
Quhile ane, quhile twa, and quhile thre,
And umquhill all him allane,
In hiddillis throw the land is gane.
Sa dred he Inglis men his mycht,
That he durst nocht wele cum in sycht.
For thai war that tyme all weldand
As maist lordis, our all the land.

Bot tythandis, that scalis sone,
Off this deid that Dowglas has done,

Come to the Cliffurd his ere, in hy,
That for his tynsaill wes sary;
And menyt his men that thai had slayne,
And syne has to purpos tane,
To big the castell up agayne.
Thar for, as man of mekill mayne,
He assemblit gret cumpany,
And till Dowglas he went in hy.
And biggyt wp the castell swyth;
And maid it rycht stalwart and styth
And put tharin victallis and men.
Ane off the Thyrwallys then
He left behind him Capitane,
And syne till Ingland went agayne.

Book IV. v. 255–460.

Bot yeit than James of Dowglas
In Dowglas Daile travailland was;
Or ellys weill ner hand tharby,
In hyddillys sumdeill priuely.
For he wald se his gouernyng,
That had the castell in keping:
And gert mak mony juperty,
To se quhethyr he wald ische blythly.
And quhen he persavyt that he
Wald blythly ische with his menye,
He maid a gadring priuely
Off thaim that war on his party;
That war sa fele, that thai durst fycht
With Thyrwall, and all the mycht
Off thaim that in the castell war.
He schupe him in the nycht to far
To Sandylandis: and thar ner by
He him enbuschyt priuely.
And send a few a trane to ma:
That sone in the mornyng gan ga,
And tuk catell, that wes the castell by,
And syne withdrew thaim hastely

Towart thaim that enbuschit war.
Than Thyrwall, for owtyn mar,
Gert arme his men, for owtyn baid;
And ischyt with all the men he haid:
And folowyt fast eftir the cry.
He wes armyt at poynt clenly,
Owtane [that] his hede wes bar.
Than, with the men that with him war,
The catell folowit he gud speid,
Rycht as a man that had na dreid,
Till that he gat off thaim a sycht.
Than prekyt thai with all thar mycht,
Folowand thaim owt off aray;
And thai sped thaim fleand, quhill thai
Fer by thair buschement war past:
And Thyrwall ay chassyt fast.
And than thai that enbuschyt war
Ischyt till him, bath les and mar,
And rayssyt sudanly the cry.
And thai that saw sa sudanly
That folk come egyrly prikand
Rycht betuix thaim and thair warand,
Thai war in to full gret effray.
And, for thai war owt off aray,
Sum off thaim fled, and sum abad.
And Dowglas, that thar with him had
A gret mengye, full egrely
Assaylyt, and scalyt thaim hastyly:
And in schort tyme ourraid thaim swa,
That weile nane eschapyt thaim fra.
Thyrwall, that wes thair capitane,
Wes thar in the bargane slane:
And off his men the mast party.
The lave fled full effraytly.

Book V. v. 10–60.

CASTLE DANGEROUS.

CHAPTER THE FIRST.

Hosts have been known at that dread sound to yield,
And, Douglas dead, his name hath won the field.

JOHN HOME.

IT was at the close of an early spring day, when nature, in a cold province of Scotland, was reviving from her winter's sleep, and the air at least, though not the vegetation, gave promise of an abatement of the rigour of the season, that two travellers, whose appearance at that early period sufficiently announced their wandering character, which, in general, secured a free passage even through a dangerous country, were seen coming from the south-westward, within a few miles of the Castle of Douglas, and seemed to be holding their course in the direction of the river of that name, whose dale afforded a species of approach to that memorable feudal fortress. The stream, small in comparison to the extent of its fame, served as a kind of drain to the country in its neighbourhood, and at the same time afforded the means of a rough road to the castle and village. The high lords to whom the castle had for ages belonged, might, had they chosen, have made this ac-

cess a great deal smoother and more convenient; but there had been as yet little or no exercise for those geniuses, who have taught all the world that it is better to take the more circuitous road round the base of a hill, than the direct course of ascending it on the one side, and descending it directly on the other, without yielding a single step to render the passage more easy to the traveller; still less were those mysteries dreamed of which M'Adam has of late days expounded. But, indeed, to what purpose should the ancient Douglasses have employed his principles, even if they had known them in ever so much perfection? Wheel-carriages, except of the most clumsy description, and for the most simple operations of agriculture, were totally unknown. Even the most delicate female had no resource save a horse, or, in case of sore infirmity, a litter. The men used their own sturdy limbs, or hardy horses, to transport themselves from place to place; and travellers, females in particular, experienced no small inconvenience from the rugged nature of the country. A swollen torrent sometimes crossed their path, and compelled them to wait until the waters had abated their frenzy. The bank of a small river was occasionally torn away by the effects of a thunder-storm, a recent inundation, or the like convulsions of nature; and the wayfarer relied upon his knowledge of the district, or obtained the best local information in his power, how to direct his path so as to surmount such untoward obstacles.

The Douglas issues from an amphitheatre of mountains which bounds the valley to the south-west, from

whose contributions, and the aid of sudden storms, it receives its scanty supplies. The general aspect of the country is that of the pastoral hills of the south of Scotland, forming, as is usual, bleak and wild farms, many of which had, at no great length of time from the date of the story, been covered with trees; as some of them still attest by bearing the name of *shaw*, that is, wild natural wood. The neighbourhood of the Douglas water itself was flat land, capable of bearing strong crops of oats and rye, supplying the inhabitants with what they required of these productions. At no great distance from the edge of the river, a few special spots excepted, the soil capable of agriculture was more and more mixed with the pastoral and woodland country, till both terminated in desolate and partly inaccessible moorlands.

Above all, it was war-time, and of necessity all circumstances of mere convenience were obliged to give way to a paramount sense of danger; the inhabitants, therefore, instead of trying to amend the paths which connected them with other districts, were thankful that the natural difficulties which surrounded them rendered it unnecessary to break up or to fortify the access from more open countries. Their wants, with a very few exceptions, were completely supplied, as we have already said, by the rude and scanty produce of their own mountains and *holms*,* the last of which served for the exercise of their limited agriculture, while the better part of the

* *Holms*, or flat plains, by the sides of the brooks and rivers, termed in the south, *Ings*

mountains and forest glens produced pasture for their herds and flocks. The recesses of the unexplored depths of these sylvan retreats being seldom disturbed, especially since the lords of the district had laid aside, during this time of strife, their constant occupation of hunting, the various kinds of game had increased of late very considerably; so that not only in crossing the rougher parts of the hilly and desolate country we are describing, different varieties of deer were occasionally seen, but even the wild cattle peculiar to Scotland sometimes shewed themselves, and other animals, which indicated the irregular and disordered state of the period. The wild-cat was frequently surprised in the dark ravines or the swampy thickets; and the wolf, already a stranger to the more populous districts of the Lothians, here maintained his ground against the encroachments of man, and was still himself a terror to those by whom he was finally to be extirpated. In winter especially, and winter was hardly yet past, these savage animals were wont to be driven to extremity for lack of food, and used to frequent, in dangerous numbers, the battle-field, the deserted churchyard—nay, sometimes the abodes of living men, there to watch for children, their defenceless prey, with as much familiarity as the fox now-a-days will venture to prowl near the mistress's * poultry-yard.

From what we have said, our readers, if they have made—as who in these days has not—the Scottish

* The good dame, or wife of a respectable farmer, is almost universally thus designated in Scotland.

tour, will be able to form a tolerably just idea of the wilder and upper part of Douglas Dale, during the earlier period of the fourteenth century. The setting sun cast his gleams along a moorland country, which to the westward broke into larger swells, terminating in the mountains called the Larger and Lesser Cairntable. The first of these is, as it were, the father of the hills in the neighbourhood, the source of an hundred streams, and by far the largest of the ridge, still holding in his dark bosom, and in the ravines with which his sides are ploughed, considerable remnants of those ancient forests with which all the high grounds of that quarter were once covered, and particularly the hills, in which the rivers—both those which run to the east, and those which seek the west to discharge themselves into the Solway—hide, like so many hermits, their original and scanty sources.

The landscape was still illuminated by the reflection of the evening sun, sometimes thrown back from pool or stream; sometimes resting on grey rocks, huge cumberers of the soil, which labour and agriculture have since removed, and sometimes contenting itself with gilding the banks of the stream, tinged, alternately grey, green, or ruddy, as the ground itself consisted of rock, or grassy turf, or bare earthern mound, or looked at a distance like a rampart of dark red porphyry. Occasionally, too, the eye rested on the steep brown extent of moorland, as the sunbeam glanced back from the little tarn or mountain pool, whose lustre, like that of the eye in the human countenance, gives a life and vivacity to every feature around.

The elder and stouter of the two travellers whom we have mentioned, was a person well, and even showily dressed, according to the finery of the times, and bore at his back, as wandering minstrels were wont, a case, containing a small harp, rote, or viol, or some such species of musical instrument for accompanying the voice. The leathern case announced so much, although it proclaimed not the exact nature of the instrument. The colour of the traveller's doublet was blue, and that of his hose violet, with slashes which shewed a lining of the same colour with the jerkin. A mantle ought, according to ordinary custom, to have covered this dress; but the heat of the sun, though the season was so early, had induced the wearer to fold up his cloak in small compass, and form it into a bundle, attached to the shoulders like the military greatcoat of the infantry soldier of the present day. The neatness with which it was made up, argued the precision of a practised traveller, who had been long accustomed to every resource which change of weather required. A great profusion of narrow ribands or points, constituting the loops with which our ancestors connected their doublet and hose, formed a kind of cordon, composed of knots of blue or violet, which surrounded the traveller's person, and thus assimilated in colour with the two garments which it was the office of these strings to combine. The bonnet usually worn with this showy dress, was of that kind with which Henry the Eighth and his son, Edward the Sixth, are usually represented. It was more fitted, from the gay stuff of which it was composed, to appear in

a public place, than to encounter a storm of rain. It was parti-coloured, being made of different stripes of blue and violet; and the wearer arrogated a certain degree of gentility to himself, by wearing a plume of considerable dimensions of the same favourite colours. The features over which this feather drooped were in no degree remarkable for peculiarity of expression. Yet in so desolate a country as the west of Scotland, it would not have been easy to pass the man without more minute attention than he would have met with where there was more in the character of the scenery to arrest the gaze of the passengers.

A quick eye, a sociable look, seeming to say, "Ay, look at me, I am a man worth noticing, and not unworthy your attention," carried with it, nevertheless, an interpretation which might be thought favourable or otherwise, according to the character of the person whom the traveller met. A knight or soldier would merely have thought that he had met a merry fellow, who could sing a wild song, or tell a wild tale, and help to empty a flagon, with all the accomplishments necessary for a boon companion at an hostelry, except perhaps an alacrity at defraying his share of the reckoning. A churchman, on the other hand, might have thought he of the blue and violet was of too loose habits, and accustomed too little to limit himself within the boundaries of beseeming mirth, to be fit society for one of his sacred calling. Yet the Man of Song had a certain steadiness of countenance, which seemed fitted to hold place in scenes of serious business as well as of gaiety. A wayfaring

passenger of wealth (not at that time a numerous class) might have feared in him a professional robber, or one whom opportunity was very likely to convert into such; a female might have been apprehensive of uncivil treatment; and a youth, or timid person, might have thought of murder, or such direful doings. Unless privately armed, however, the minstrel was ill-accoutred for any dangerous occupation. His only visible weapon was a small crooked sword, like what we now call a hanger; and the state of the times would have justified any man, however peaceful his intentions, in being so far armed against the perils of the road.

If a glance at this man had in any respect prejudiced him in the opinion of those whom he met on his journey, a look at his companion would, so far as his character could be guessed at—for he was closely muffled up—have passed for an apology and warrant for his associate. The younger traveller was apparently in early youth, a soft and gentle boy, whose Sclavonic gown, the appropriate dress of the pilgrim, he wore more closely drawn about him than the coldness of the weather seemed to authorize or recommend. His features, imperfectly seen under the hood of his pilgrim's dress, were prepossessing in a high degree; and though he wore a walking sword, it seemed rather to be in compliance with general fashion than from any violent purpose he did so. There were traces of sadness upon his brow, and of tears upon his cheeks; and his weariness was such, as even his rougher companion seemed to sympathize with, while he privately participated also in the sorrow

which left its marks upon a countenance so lovely. They spoke together, and the elder of the two, while he assumed the deferential air proper to a man of inferior rank addressing a superior, shewed, in tone and gesture, something that amounted to interest and affection.

"Bertram, my friend," said the younger of the two, "how far are we still from Douglas Castle? We have already come farther than the twenty miles, which thou didst say was the distance from Cammock —or how didst thou call the last hostelry which we left by daybreak?"

"Cumnock, my dearest lady—I beg ten thousand excuses—my gracious young lord."

"Call me Augustine," replied his comrade, "if you mean to speak as is fittest for the time."

"Nay, as for that," said Bertram, "if your ladyship can condescend to lay aside your quality, my own good-breeding is not so firmly sewed to me but that I can doff it, and resume it again without its losing a stitch; and since your ladyship, to whom I am sworn in obedience, is pleased to command that I should treat you as my own son, shame it were to me if I were not to shew you the affection of a father, more especially as I may well swear my great oath, that I owe you the duty of such, though well I wot it has, in our case, been the lot of the parent to be maintained by the kindness and liberality of the child; for when was it that I hungered or thirsted, and the *black stock** of Berkley did not relieve my wants!"

* The table dormant, which stood in a baron's hall, was often so designated.

"I would have it so," answered the young pilgrim; "I would have it so. What use of the mountains of beef, and the oceans of beer, which they say our domains produce, if there is a hungry heart among our vassalage, or especially if thou, Bertram, who hast served as the minstrel of our house for more than twenty years, shouldst experience such a feeling?"

"Certes, lady," answered Bertram, "it would be like the catastrophe which is told of the Baron of Fastenough, when his last mouse was starved to death in the very pantry; and if I escape this journey without such a calamity, I shall think myself out of reach of thirst or famine for the whole of my life."

"Thou hast suffered already once or twice by these attacks, my poor friend," said the lady.

"It is little," answered Bertram, "anything that I have suffered; and I were ungrateful to give the inconvenience of missing a breakfast, or making an untimely dinner, so serious a name. But then I hardly see how your ladyship can endure this gear much longer. You must yourself feel, that the plodding along these high lands, of which the Scots give us such good measure in their miles, is no jesting matter; and as for Douglas Castle, why it is still three good miles off."

"The question then is," quoth the lady, heaving a sigh, "what we are to do when we have so far to travel, and when the castle gates must be locked long before we arrive there."

"For that I will pledge my word," answered Bertram. "The gates of Douglas, under the keeping of

Sir John de Walton, do not open so easily as those of the buttery-hatch at our own castle, when it is well oiled; and if your ladyship take my advice, you will turn southward ho! and in two days at farthest, we shall be in a land where men's wants are provided for, as the inns proclaim it, with the least possible delay, and the secret of this little journey shall never be known to living mortal but ourselves, as sure as I am sworn minstrel, and man of faith."

"I thank thee for thy advice, mine honest Bertram," said the lady, "but I cannot profit by it. Should thy knowledge of these parts possess thee with an acquaintance with any decent house, whether it belong to rich or poor, I would willingly take quarters there, if I could obtain them from this time until to-morrow morning. The gates of Douglas Castle will then be open to guests of so peaceful an appearance as we carry with us, and—and—it will out—we might have time to make such applications to our toilet as might ensure us a good reception, by drawing a comb through our locks, or such like foppery."

"Ah, madam!" said Bertram, "were not Sir John de Walton in question, methinks I should venture to reply, that an unwashed brow, an unkempt head of hair, and a look far more saucy than your ladyship ever wears, or can wear, were the proper disguise to trick out that minstrel's boy, whom you wish to represent in the present pageant."

"Do you suffer your youthful pupils to be indeed so slovenly and so saucy, Bertram?" answered the lady. "I for one will not imitate them in that par-

ticular; and whether Sir John be now in the Castle of Douglas or not, I will treat the soldiers who hold so honourable a charge with a washed brow, and a head of hair somewhat ordered. As for going back without seeing a castle which has mingled even with my very dreams—at a word, Bertram, thou mayest go that way, but I will not."

"And if I part with your ladyship on such terms," responded the minstrel, "now your frolic is so nearly accomplished, it shall be the foul fiend himself, and nothing more comely or less dangerous, that shall tear me from your side; and for lodging, there is not far from hence the house of one Tom Dickson of Hazelside, one of the most honest fellows of the dale, and who, although a labouring man, ranked as high as a warrior, when I was in this country, as any noble gentleman that rode in the band of the Douglas."

"He is, then, a soldier?" said the lady.

"When his country or his lord need his sword," replied Bertram—"and, to say the truth, they are seldom at peace; but otherwise, he is no enemy, save to the wolf which plunders his herds."

"But forget not, my trusty guide," replied the lady, "that the blood in our veins is English, and consequently, that we are in danger from all who call themselves foes to the ruddy Cross."

"Do not fear this man's faith," answered Bertram. "You may trust to him as to the best knight or gentleman of the land. We may make good our lodging by a tune or a song; and it may remember you that I undertook (provided it pleased your lady-

ship) to temporize a little with the Scots, who, poor souls, love minstrelsy, and when they have but a silver penny, will willingly bestow it to encourage the *gay science*—I promised you, I say, that we should be as welcome to them as if we had been born amidst their own wild hills; and for the best that such a house as Dickson's affords, the gleeman's son, fair lady, shall not breathe a wish in vain. And now, will you speak your mind to your devoted friend and adopted father, or rather your sworn servant and guide, Bertram the Minstrel, what it is your pleasure to do in this matter?"

"O, we will certainly accept of the Scot's hospitality," said the lady, "your minstrel word being plighted that he is a true man.—Tom Dickson, call you him?"

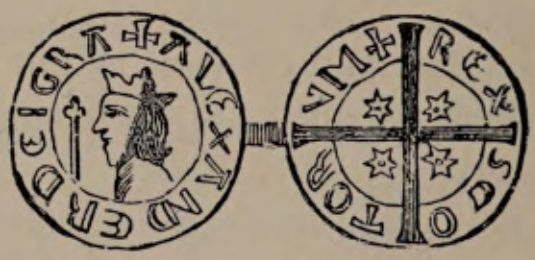
"Yes," replied Bertram, "such is his name; and by looking on these sheep, I am assured that we are now upon his land."

"Indeed!" said the lady, with some surprise; "and how is your wisdom aware of that?"

"I see the first letter of his name marked upon this flock," answered the guide. "Ah, learning is what carries a man through the world, as well as if he had the ring by virtue of which old minstrels tell that Adam understood the language of the beasts in paradise. Ah, madam, there is more wit taught in the shepherd's shieling than the lady thinks of, who sews her painted seam in her summer bower."

"Be it so, good Bertram. And although not so deeply skilled in the knowledge of written language as you are, it is impossible for me to esteem its value

more than I actually do; so hold we on the nearest road to this Tom Dickson's, whose very sheep tell of his whereabout. I trust we have not very far to go, although the knowledge that our journey is shortened by a few miles has so much recovered my fatigue, that methinks I could dance all the rest of the way."



PENNY OF JOHN BALIOL.

CHAPTER THE SECOND.

Rosalind. Well, this is the Forest of Arden.

Touchstone. Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I. When I was at home I was in a better place; but travellers must be content.

Rosalind. Ay, be so, good Touchstone. Look you, who comes here; a young man and an old, in solemn talk.

As You Like It, *Act II., Scene* 4.

As the travellers spoke together, they reached a turn of the path which presented a more extensive prospect than the broken face of the country had yet shewn them. A valley, through which flowed a small tributary stream, exhibited the wild, but not unpleasant, features of "a lone vale of green braken," here and there besprinkled with groups of alder-trees, of hazels, and of copse-oakwood, which had maintained their stations in the recesses of the valley, although they had vanished from the loftier and more exposed sides of the hills. The farm-house or mansion-house, (for, from its size and appearance, it might have been the one or the other,) was a large but low building, and the walls of the out-houses were sufficiently strong to resist any band of casual depredators. There was nothing, however, which could withstand a more powerful force; for, in a country laid waste by war, the farmer was then, as now, obliged to take his chance of the great

evils attendant upon that state of things; and his condition, never a very eligible one, was rendered considerably worse by the insecurity attending it. About half a mile farther was seen a Gothic building of very small extent, having a half dismantled chapel, which the minstrel pronounced to be the Abbey of Saint Bride. "The place," he said, "I understand, is allowed to subsist, as two or three old monks and as many nuns, whom it contains, are permitted by the English to serve God there, and sometimes to give relief to Scottish travellers; and who have accordingly taken assurance with Sir John de Walton, and accepted as their superior a churchman on whom he thinks he can depend. But if these guests happen to reveal any secrets, they are, by some means or other, believed to fly towards the English governor; and therefore, unless your ladyship's commands be positive, I think we had best not trust ourselves to their hospitality."

"Of a surety, no," said the lady, "if thou canst provide me with lodgings where we shall have more prudent hosts."

At this moment, two human forms were seen to approach the farm-house in a different direction from the travellers, and speaking so high, in a tone apparently of dispute, that the minstrel and his companion could distinguish their voices though the distance was considerable. Having screened his eyes with his hand for some minutes, Bertram at length exclaimed, "By our Lady, it is my old friend, Tom Dickson, sure enough!—What can make him in such bad humour with the lad, who, I think, may be the

little wild boy, his son Charles, who used to run about and plait rushes some twenty years ago? It is lucky, however, we have found our friends astir; for I warrant, Tom hath a hearty piece of beef in the pot ere he goes to bed, and he must have changed his wont if an old friend hath not his share; and who knows, had we come later, at what hour they may now find it convenient to drop latch and draw bolt so near a hostile garrison; for if we call things by their right names, such is the proper term for an English garrison in the castle of a Scottish nobleman."

"Foolish man," answered the lady, "thou judgest of Sir John de Walton as thou wouldst of some rude boor, to whom the opportunity of doing what he wills is a temptation and license to exercise cruelty and oppression. Now, I could plight you my word, that, setting apart the quarrel of the kingdoms, which, of course, will be fought out in fair battles on both sides, you will find that English and Scottish, within this domain, and within the reach of Sir John de Walton's influence, live together as that same flock of sheep and goats do with the shepherd's dog; a foe from whom they fly upon certain occasions, but around whom they nevertheless eagerly gather for protection should a wolf happen to shew himself."

"It is not to your ladyship," answered Bertram, "that I should venture to state my opinion of such matters; but the young knight, when he is sheathed in armour, is a different being from him who feasts in halls among press of ladies; and he that feeds by another man's fireside, and when his landlord, of all

men in the world, chances to be the Black Douglas, has reason to keep his eyes about him as he makes his meal:—but it were better I looked after our own evening refreshment, than that I stood here gaping and talking about other folk's matters." So saying, he called out in a thundering tone of voice, "Dickson!—what ho, Thomas Dickson!—will you not acknowledge an old friend who is much disposed to trust his supper and night's lodging to your hospitality?"

The Scotchman, attracted by the call, looked first along the banks of the river, then upwards to the bare side of the hill, and at length cast his eye upon the two figures who were descending from it.

As if he felt the night colder while he advanced from the more sheltered part of the valley to meet them, the Douglas Dale farmer wrapped closer around him the grey plaid, which, from an early period, has been used by the shepherds of the south of Scotland, and the appearance of which gives a romantic air to the peasantry and middle classes; and which, although less brilliant and gaudy in its colours, is as picturesque in its arrangement as the more military tartan mantle of the Highlands. When they approached near to each other, the lady might observe that this friend of her guide was a stout athletic man, somewhat past the middle of life, and already showing marks of the approach, but none of the infirmities, of age, upon a countenance which had been exposed to many a storm. Sharp eyes, too, and a quick observation, exhibited signs of vigilance, acquired by one who had lived long in a country

where he had constant occasion for looking around him with caution. His features were still swollen with displeasure; and the handsome young man who attended him seemed to be discontented, like one who had undergone no gentle marks of his father's indignation, and who, from the sullen expression which mingled with an appearance of shame on his countenance, seemed at once affected by anger and remorse.

"Do you not remember me, old friend?" said Bertram, as they approached within a distance for communing; "or have the twenty years which have marched over us since we met, carried along with them all remembrance of Bertram, the English minstrel?"

"In troth," answered the Scot, "it is not for want of plenty of your countrymen to keep you in my remembrance, and I have hardly heard one of them so much as whistle

'Hey, now the day dawns,'

but it has recalled some note of your blythe rebeck; and yet such animals are we, that I had forgot the mien of my old friend, and scarcely knew him at a distance. But we have had trouble lately; there are a thousand of your countrymen that keep garrison in the Perilous Castle of Douglas yonder, as well as in other places though the vale, and that is but a woeful sight for a true Scotchman—even my own poor house has not escaped the dignity of a garrison of a man-at-arms, besides two or three archer knaves, and one or two slips of mischievous boys called

pages, and so forth, who will not let a man say, 'this is my own,' by his own fireside. Do not, therefore, think hardly of me, old comrade, if I shew you a welcome something colder than you might expect from a friend of other days; for, by Saint Bride of Douglas, I have scarcely any thing left to which I can say welcome."

"Small welcome will serve," said Bertram. "My son, make thy reverence to thy father's old friend. Augustine is learning my joyous trade, but he will need some practice ere he can endure its fatigues. If you could give him some little matter of food, and a quiet bed for the night, there's no fear but that we shall both do well enough; for I dare say when you travel with my friend Charles there,—if that tall youth chance to be my old acquaintance Charles,—you will find yourself accommodated when his wants are once well provided for."

"Nay, the foul fiend take me if I do," answered the Scottish husbandman. "I know not what the lads of this day are made of—not of the same clay as their fathers, to be sure—not sprung from the heather, which fears neither wind nor rain, but from some delicate plant of a foreign country, which will not thrive unless it be nourished under glass, with a murrain to it. The good Lord of Douglas—I have been his henchman, and can vouch for it—did not in his pagehood desire such food and lodging as, in the present day, will hardly satisfy such a lad as your friend Charles."

"Nay," said Bertram, "it is not that my Augustine is over nice; but, for other reasons, I must re-

quest of you a bed to himself; he hath of late been unwell."

"Ay, I understand," said Dickson, "your son hath had a touch of that illness which terminates so frequently in the black death you English folk die of? We hear much of the havoc it has made to the southward. Comes it hitherward?"

Bertram nodded.

"Well, my father's house," continued the farmer, "hath more rooms than one, and your son shall have one well-aired and comfortable; and for supper, ye shall have a part of what is prepared for your countrymen, though I would rather have their room than their company. Since I am bound to feed a score of them, they will not dispute the claim of such a skilful minstrel as thou art to a night's hospitality. I am ashamed to say that I must do their bidding even in my own house. Well-a-day, if my good lord were in possession of his own, I have heart and hand enough to turn the whole of them out of my house, like—like——"

"To speak plainly," said Bertram, "like a southern strolling gang from Redesdale, whom I have seen you fling out of your house like a litter of blind puppies, when not one of them looked behind to see who had done him the courtesy until he was half-way to Cairntable."

"Ay," answered the Scotchman, drawing himself up at least six inches taller than before; "then I had a house of my own, and a cause and an arm to keep it. Now I am—what signifies it what I am?—the noblest lord in Scotland is little better."

"Truly, friend," said Bertram, "now you view this matter in a rational light. I do not say that the wisest, the richest, or the strongest man in the world has any right to tyrannize over his neighbour, because he is the more weak, ignorant, and the poorer; but yet if he does enter into such a controversy, he must submit to the course of nature, and that will always give the advantage in the tide of battle to wealth, strength, and health."

"With permission, however," answered Dickson, "the weaker party, if he use his faculties to the utmost, may, in the long run, obtain revenge upon the author of his sufferings, which would be at least compensation for his temporary submission; and he acts simply as a man, and most foolishly as a Scotchman, whether he sustain these wrongs with the insensibility of an idiot, or whether he endeavour to revenge them before Heaven's appointed time has arrived.—But if I talk thus, I shall scare you, as I have scared some of your countrymen, from accepting a meal of meat, and a night's lodging, in a house where you might be called with the morning to a bloody settlement of a national quarrel."

"Never mind," said Bertram, "we have been known to each other of old; and I am no more afraid of meeting unkindness in your house, than you expect me to come here for the purpose of adding to the injuries of which you complain."

"So be it," said Dickson; "and you, my old friend, are as welcome to my abode as when it never held any guest, save of my own inviting.—And you, my young friend, Master Augustine, shall be looked

after as well as if you came with a gay brow and a light cheek, such as best becomes the *gay science.*"

"But wherefore, may I ask," said Bertram, "so much displeased but not at my young friend Charles?"

The youth answered before his father had time to speak. "My father, good sir, may put what show upon it he will, but shrewd and wise men wax weak in the brain in these troublous times. He saw two or three wolves seize upon three of our choicest wethers; and because I shouted to give the alarm to the English garrison, he was angry as if he could have murdered me—just for saving the sheep from the jaws that would have devoured them."

"This is a strange account of thee, old friend," said Bertram. "Dost thou connive with the wolves in robbing thine own fold?"

"Why, let it pass if thou lovest me," answered the countryman; "Charles could tell thee something nearer the truth if he had a mind; but for the present let it pass."

The minstrel, perceiving that the Scotchman was fretted and embarrassed with the subject, pressed it no farther.

At this moment, in crossing the threshold of Thomas Dickson's house, they were greeted with sounds from two English soldiers within. "Quiet, Anthony," said one voice,—"quiet, man!—for the sake of common sense, if not common manners;—Robin Hood himself never sat down to his board ere the roast was ready."

"Ready!" quoth another rough voice; "it is

roasting to rags, and small had been the knave Dickson's share, even of these rags, had it not been the express orders of the worshipful Sir John de Walton, that the soldiers who lie at outposts should afford to the inmates such provisions as are not necessary for their own subsistence."

"Hush, Anthony,—hush, for shame!" replied his fellow-soldier, "if ever I heard our host's step, I heard it this instant; so give over thy grumbling, since our captain, as we all know, hath prohibited, under strict penalties, all quarrels between his followers and the people of the country."

"I am sure," replied Anthony, "that I have ministered occasion to none; but I would I were equally certain of the good meaning of this sullen-browed Thomas Dickson towards the English soldiers, for I seldom go to bed in this dungeon of a house, but I expect my throat will gape as wide as a thirsty oyster before I awaken. Here he comes, however," added Anthony, sinking his sharp tones as he spoke; "and I hope to be excommunicated if he has not brought with him that mad animal, his son Charles, and two other strangers, hungry enough, I'll be sworn, to eat up the whole supper, if they do us no other injury."

"Shame of thyself, Anthony," repeated his comrade; "a good archer thou as ever wore Kendal green, and yet affect to be frightened for two tired travellers, and alarmed for the inroad their hunger may make on the night's meal. There are four or five of us here—we have our bows and our bills within reach, and scorn to be chased from our sup-

per, or cheated out of our share of it by a dozen Scotchmen, whether stationary or strollers. How say'st thou?" he added, turning to Dickson—"How say ye, quarter-master? it is no secret, that by the directions given to our post, we must enquire into the occupations of such guests as you may receive besides ourselves, your unwilling inmates; you are as ready for supper, I warrant, as supper is for you, and I will only delay you and my friend Anthony, who becomes dreadfully impatient, until you answer two or three questions which you wot of."

"Bend the-Bow," answered Dickson, "thou art a civil fellow; and although it is something hard to be constrained to give an account of one's friends, because they chance to quarter in one's own house for a night or two, yet I must submit to the times, and make no vain opposition. You may mark down in your breviary there, that upon the fourteenth day before Palm Sunday, Thomas Dickson brought to his house of Hazelside, in which you hold garrison, by orders from the English governor, Sir John de Walton, two strangers, to whom the said Thomas Dickson had promised refreshment, and a bed for the evening, if it be lawful at this time and place."

"But what are they, these strangers?" said Anthony, somewhat sharply.

"A fine world the while," murmured Thomas Dickson, "that an honest man should be forced to answer the questions of every paltry companion!" —But he mitigated his voice and proceeded. "The eldest of my guests is Bertram, an ancient English minstrel, who is bound on his own errand to the

Castle of Douglas, and will communicate what he has to say of news to Sir John de Walton himself. I have known him for twenty years, and never heard anything of him save that he was good man and true. The younger stranger is his son, a lad recovering from the English disorder, which has been raging far and wide in Westmoreland and Cumberland."

"Tell me," said Bend-the-Bow, "this same Bertram, was he not about a year since in the service of some noble lady in our own country?"

"I have heard so," answered Dickson.

"We shall, in that case, I think, incur little danger," replied Bend-the-Bow, "by allowing this old man and his son to proceed on their journey to the castle."

"You are my elder and my better," answered Anthony; "but I may remind you that it is not so clearly our duty to give free passage, into a garrison of a thousand men of all ranks, to a youth who has been so lately attacked by a contagious disorder; and I question if our commander would not rather hear that the Black Douglas, with a hundred devils as black as himself, since such is his colour, had taken possession of the outpost of Hazelside with sword and battle-axe, than that one person suffering under this fell sickness had entered peaceably, and by the opened wicket of the castle."

"There is something in what thou sayest, Anthony," replied his comrade; "and considering that our governor, since he has undertaken the troublesome job of keeping a castle which is esteemed so

much more dangerous than any other within Scotland, has become one of the most cautious and jealous men in the world, we had better, I think, inform him of the circumstance, and take his commands how the stripling is to be dealt with."

"Content am I," said the archer; "and, first, methinks, I would just, in order to shew that we know what belongs to such a case, ask the stripling a few questions, as how long he has been ill, by what physicians he has been attended, when he was cured, and how his cure is certified, etc."

"True, brother," said Bend-the-Bow. "Thou hearest, minstrel, we would ask thy son some questions —What has become of him?—he was in this apartment but now."

"So please you," answered Bertram, "he did but pass through the apartment. Mr. Thomas Dickson, at my entreaty, as well as in respectful reverence to your honour's health, carried him through the room without tarriance, judging his own bed-chamber the fittest place for a young man recovering from a severe illness, and after a day of no small fatigue."

"Well," answered the elder archer, "though it is uncommon for men who, like us, live by bow-string and quiver, to meddle with interrogations and examinations; yet, as the case stands, we must make some enquiries of your son, ere we permit him to set forth to the Castle of Douglas, where you say his errand leads him."

"Rather my errand, noble sir," said the minstrel, "than that of the young man himself."

"If such be the case," answered Bend-the-Bow,

"we may sufficiently do our duty by sending yourself, with the first grey light of dawn, to the castle, and letting your son remain in bed, which I warrant is the fittest place for him, until we shall receive Sir John de Walton's commands whether he is to be brought onward or not."

"And we may as well," said Anthony, "since we are to have this man's company at supper, make him acquainted with the rules of the out garrison stationed here for the time." So saying, he pulled a scroll from his leathern pouch, and said, "Minstrel, canst thou read?"

"It becomes my calling," said the minstrel.

"It has nothing to do with mine, though," answered the archer, "and therefore do thou read these regulations aloud; for since I do not comprehend these characters by sight, I lose no chance of having them read over to me as often as I can, that I may fix their sense in my memory. So beware that thou readest the words letter for letter as they are set down; for thou dost so at thy peril, Sir Minstrel, if thou readest not like a true man."

"On my minstrel word," said Bertram, and began to read excessively slow; for he wished to gain a little time for consideration, which he foresaw would be necessary to prevent his being separated from his mistress, which was likely to occasion her much anxiety and distress. He therefore began thus:—

"'Outpost at Hazelside, the steading of Goodman Thomas Dickson'—Ay, Thomas, and is thy house so called?"

"It is the ancient name of the steading," said

the Scot, "being surrounded by a hazel-shaw, or thicket."

"Hold your chattering tongue, minstrel," said Anthony, "and proceed, as you value that or your ears, which you seem disposed to make less use of."

"'His garrison,'" proceeded the minstrel, reading, "'consists of a lance with its furniture.' What, then, a lance, in other words, a belted knight, commands this party?"

"'Tis no concern of thine," said the archer.

"But it is," answered the minstrel; "we have a right to be examined by the highest person in presence."

"I will shew thee, thou rascal," said the archer, starting up, "that I am lance enough for thee to reply to, and I will break thy head if thou say'st a word more."

"Take care, brother Anthony," said his comrade, "we are to use travellers courteously—and, with your leave, those travellers best who come from our native land."

"It is even so stated here," said the minstrel, and he proceeded to read:—"'The watch at this outpost of Hazelside * shall stop and examine all travel-

* [Hazelside Place, the fief granted to Thomas Dickson by William the Hardy, seventh Lord Douglas, is still pointed out about two miles to the south-west of the Castle Dangerous. Dickson was sixty years of age at the time when Lord James first appeared at Douglasdale. His heirs kept possession of the fief for centuries; and some respectable gentlemen's families in Lanarkshire still trace themselves to this ancestor.—*From Notes by Mr. Haddow.*]

lers passing by the said station, suffering such to pass onward to the town of Douglas or to Douglas Castle, always interrogating them with civility, and detaining and turning them back if there arise matter of suspicion; but conducting themselves in all matters civilly and courteously to the people of the country, and to those who travel in it.' You see, most excellent and valiant archer," added the commentator Bertram, "that courtesy and civility are, above all, recommended to your worship in your conduct towards the inhabitants, and those passengers who, like us, may chance to fall under your rules in such matters."

"I am not to be told at this time of day," said the archer, "how to conduct myself in the discharge of my duties. Let me advise you, Sir Minstrel, to be frank and open in your answers to our inquiries, and you shall have no reason to complain."

"I hope at all events," said the minstrel, "to have your favour for my son, who is a delicate stripling, and not accustomed to play his part among the crew which inhabit this wild world."

"Well," continued the elder and more civil of the two archers, "if thy son be a novice in this terrestrial navigation, I warrant that thou, my friend, from thy look and manner of speech, hast enough of skill to use thy compass. To comfort thee, although thou must thyself answer the questions of our governor or deputy-governor, in order that he may see there is no offence in thee, I think there may be permission granted for thy son's residing here in the convent hard by, (where the nuns, by the way, are as old as the monks, and have nearly as long beards,

so thou may'st be easy about thy son's morals,) until thou hast done thy business at Douglas Castle, and art ready to resume thy journey."

"If such permission," said the minstrel, "can be obtained, I should be better pleased to leave him at the abbey, and go myself, in the first place, to take the directions of your commanding officer."

"Certainly," answered the archer, "that will be the safest and best way; and with a piece or two of money, thou may'st secure the protection of the abbot."

"Thou say'st well," answered the minstrel; "I have known life, I have known every stile, gap, pathway, and pass of this wilderness of ours for some thirty years; and he that cannot steer his course fairly through it like an able seaman, after having served such an apprenticeship, can hardly ever be taught, were a century to be given him to learn it in."

"Since thou art so expert a mariner," answered the archer Anthony, "thou hast, I warrant me, met in thy wanderings a potation called a morning's draught, which they who are conducted by others, where they themselves lack experience, are used to bestow upon those who undertake the task of guide upon such an occasion?"

"I understand you, sir," quoth the minstrel; "and although money, or *drink-geld*, as the Fleming calls it, is rather a scarce commodity in the purse of one of my calling, yet according to my feeble ability, thou shalt have no cause to complain that thine eyes or those of thy comrades have been damaged by a Scot

tish mist, while we can find an English coin to pay for the good liquor which would wash them clear."

"Content," said the archer; "we now understand each other; and if difficulties arise on the road, thou shalt not want the countenance of Anthony to sail triumphantly through them. But thou hadst better let thy son know soon of the early visit to the abbot to-morrow, for thou mayst guess that we cannot and dare not delay our departure for the convent a minute after the eastern sky is ruddy; and, with other infirmities, young men often are prone to laziness and a love of ease."

"Thou shalt have no reason to think so," answered the minstrel; "not the lark himself, when waked by the first ray peeping over the black cloud, springs more lightly to the sky, than will my Augustine answer the same brilliant summons. And now we understand each other, I would only further pray you to forbear light talk while my son is in your company, —a boy of innocent life, and timid in conversation."

"Nay, jolly minstrel," said the elder archer, "thou givest us here too gross an example of Satan reproving sin. If thou hast followed thy craft for twenty years, as thou pretendest, thy son, having kept thee company since childhood, must by this time be fit to open a school to teach even devils the practice of the seven deadly sins, of which none know the theory if those of the *gay science* are lacking."

"Truly, comrade, thou speakest well," answered Bertram, "and I acknowledge that we minstrels are too much to blame in this matter. Nevertheless, in good sooth, the fault is not one of which I myself am

particularly guilty; on the contrary, I think that he who would wish to have his own hair honoured when time has strewed it with silver, should so rein his mirth when in the presence of the young, as may shew in what respect he holds innocence. I will, therefore, with your permission, speak a word to Augustine, that to-morrow we must be on foot early."

"Do so, my friend," said the English soldier; "and do the same the more speedily that our poor supper is still awaiting until thou art ready to partake of it."

"To which, I promise thee," said Bertram, "I am disposed to entertain no delay."

"Follow me, then," said Dickson, "and I will shew thee where this young bird of thine has his nest."

Their host accordingly tripped up the wooden stair, and tapped at a door, which he thus indicated was that of his younger guest.

"Your father," continued he, as the door opened, "would speak with you, Master Augustine."

"Excuse me, my host," answered Augustine; "the truth is, that this room being directly above your eating-chamber, and the flooring not in the best possible repair, I have been compelled to the unhandsome practice of eavesdropping, and not a word has escaped me that passed concerning my proposed residence at the abbey, our journey to-morrow, and the somewhat early hour at which I must shake off sloth, and, according to thy expression, fly down from the roost."

"And how dost thou relish," said Dickson, "being

left with the Abbot of Saint Bride's little flock here?"

"Why, well," said the youth, "if the abbot is a man of respectability becoming his vocation, and not one of those swaggering churchmen, who stretch out the sword, and bear themselves like rank soldiers in these troublous times."

"For that, young master," said Dickson, "if you let him put his hand deep enough into your purse, he will hardly quarrel with any thing."

"Then I will leave him to my father," replied Augustine, "who will not grudge him any thing he asks in reason."

"In that case," replied the Scotchman, "you may trust to our abbot for good accommodation—and so both sides are pleased."

"It is well, my son," said Bertram, who now joined in the conversation; "and that thou mayst be ready for thy early travelling, I shall presently get our host to send thee some food, after partaking of which thou shouldst go to bed and sleep off the fatigue of to-day, since to-morrow will bring work for itself."

"And as for thy engagement to these honest archers," answered Augustine, "I hope you will be able to do what will give pleasure to our guides, if they are disposed to be civil and true men."

"God bless thee, my child!" answered Bertram; "thou knowest already what would drag after thy beck all the English archers that were ever on this side of the Solway. There is no fear of a grey goose shaft, if you sing a *réveillez* like to that which chimed

even now from that silken nest of dainty young goldfinches."

"Hold me as in readiness, then," said the seeming youth, "when you depart to-morrow morning. I am within hearing, I suppose, of the bells of Saint Bride's chapel, and have no fear, through my sloth, of keeping you or your company waiting."

"Good night, and God bless thee, my child!" again said the minstrel; "remember that your father sleeps not far distant, and on the slightest alarm will not fail to be with you. I need scarce bid thee recommend thyself, meantime, to the great Being, who is the friend and father of us all."

The pilgrim thanked his supposed father for his evening blessing, and the visitors withdrew without farther speech at the time, leaving the young lady to those engrossing fears, which the novelty of her situation, and the native delicacy of her sex being considered, naturally thronged upon her.

The tramp of a horse's foot was not long after heard at the house of Hazelside, and the rider was welcomed by its garrison with marks of respect. Bertram understood so much as to discover from the conversation of the warders that this late arrival was Aymer de Valence, the knight who commanded the little party, and to the furniture of whose lance, as it was technically called, belonged the archers with whom we have already been acquainted, a man-at-arms or two, a certain proportion of pages or grooms, and, in short, the command and guidance of the garrison at Thomas Dickson's, while in rank he was deputy-governor of Douglas Castle.

To prevent all suspicion respecting himself and his companion, as well as the risk of the latter being disturbed, the minstrel thought it proper to present himself to the inspection of this knight, the great authority of the little place. He found him with as little scruple as the archers heretofore, making a supper of the relics of the roast beef.

Before this young knight Bertram underwent an examination, while an old soldier took down in writing such items of information as the examinate thought proper to express in his replies, both with regard to the minutiæ of his present journey, his business at Castle Douglas, and his route when that business should be accomplished; a much more minute examination, in a word, than he had hitherto undergone by the archers, or perhaps than was quite agreeable to him, being encumbered with at least the knowledge of one secret, whatever more. Not that this new examinator had anything stern or severe in his looks or his questions. As to the first, he was mild, gentle, and "meek as a maid," and possessed exactly of the courteous manners ascribed by our father Chaucer to the pattern of chivalry whom he describes upon his pilgrimage to Canterbury. But with all his gentleness, De Valence shewed a great degree of acuteness and accuracy in his queries; and well pleased was Bertram that the young knight did not insist upon seeing his supposed son, although even in that case his ready wit had resolved, like a seaman in a tempest, to sacrifice one part to preserve the rest. He was not, however, driven to this extremity, being treated by Sir Aymer with that de-

gree of courtesy which in that age men of song were in general thought entitled to. The knight kindly and liberally consented to the lad's remaining in the convent, as a fit and quiet residence for a stripling and an invalid, until Sir John de Walton should express his pleasure on the subject; and Sir Aymer consented to this arrangement the more willingly, as it averted all possible danger of bringing disease into the English garrison.

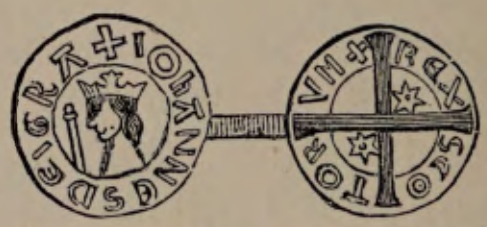
By the young knight's order, all in Dickson's house were despatched earlier to rest than usual; the matin bell of the neighbouring chapel being the signal for their assembly by daybreak. They rendezvoused accordingly, and proceeded to Saint Bride's, where they heard mass, after which an interview took place between the abbot Jerome and the minstrel, in which the former undertook, with the permission of De Valence, to receive Augustine into his abbey as a guest for a few days, less or more, and for which Bertram promised an acknowledgment in name of alms, which was amply satisfactory.

"So be it," said Bertram, taking leave of his supposed son; "rely on it I will not tarry a day longer at Douglas Castle than shall suffice for transacting my business there, which is to look after the old books you wot of, and I will speedily return for thee to the Abbey of Saint Bride, to resume in company our journey homeward."

"O father," replied the youth, with a smile, "I fear, if you get among romances and chronicles, you will be so earnest in your researches, that you will forget poor Augustine and his concerns."

"Never fear me, Augustine," said the old man, making the motion of throwing a kiss towards the boy; "thou art good and virtuous, and Heaven will not neglect thee, were thy father unnatural enough to do so. Believe me, all the old songs since Merlin's day shall not make me forget thee."

Thus they separated, the minstrel, with the English knight and his retinue, to move towards the castle, and the youth in dutiful attendance on the venerable abbot, who was delighted to find that his guest's thoughts turned rather upon spiritual things than on the morning repast, of the approach of which he could not help being himself sensible.



HALFPENNY: JOHN BALIOL.

CHAPTER THE THIRD.

This night, methinks, is but the daylight sick,
It looks a little paler ; 'tis a day
Such as the day is when the sun is hid.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

To facilitate the progress of the party on its way to Douglas Castle, the Knight of Valence offered the minstrel the convenience of a horse, which the fatigues of yesterday made him gladly accept. Any one acquainted with equestrian exercise, is aware that no means of refreshment carries away the sense of fatigue from over walking so easily, as the exchange to riding, which calls into play another set of muscles, and leaves those which have been over-exerted an opportunity of resting through change of motion, more completely than they could in absolute repose. Sir Aymer de Valence was sheathed in armour, and mounted on his charger; two of the archers, a groom of mean rank, and a squire, who looked in his day for the honour of knighthood, completed the detachment, which seemed so disposed as to secure the minstrel from escape, and to protect him against violence. "Not," said the young knight, addressing himself to Bertram, "that there is usually danger in travelling in this country any more than in the most quiet districts of England; but some disturbances, as you may have learnt, have

broken out here within this last year, and have caused the garrison of Castle Douglas to maintain a stricter watch. But let us move on, for the complexion of the day is congenial with the original derivation of the name of the country, and the description of the chiefs to whom it belonged—*Sholto Dhu Glass*—(see yon dark grey man), and dark grey will our route prove this morning, though by good luck it is not long."

The morning was indeed what the original Gaelic words implied, a drizzly, dark, moist day; the mist had settled upon the hills, and unrolled itself upon brook, glade, and tarn, and the spring breeze was not powerful enough to raise the veil, though, from the wild sounds which were heard occasionally on the ridges, and through the glens, it might be supposed to wail at a sense of its own inability. The route of the travellers was directed by the course which the river had ploughed for itself down the valley, the banks of which bore in general that dark grey livery which Sir Aymer de Valence had intimated to be the prevalent tint of the country. Some ineffectual struggles of the sun shot a ray here and there to salute the peaks of the hills; yet these were unable to surmount the dulness of a March morning, and, at so early an hour, produced a variety of shades, rather than a gleam of brightness upon the eastern horizon. The view was monotonous and depressing, and apparently the good knight Aymer sought some amusement in occasional talk with Bertram, who, as was usual with his craft, possessed a fund of knowledge, and a power of conversation, well

suited to pass away a dull morning. The minstrel, well pleased to pick up such information as he might be able concerning the present state of the country, embraced every opportunity of sustaining the dialogue.

"I would speak with you, Sir Minstrel," said the young knight. "If thou dost not find the air of this morning too harsh for thine organs, heartily do I wish thou wouldst fairly tell me what can have induced thee, being, as thou seemest, a man of sense, to trust thyself into a wild country like this, at such a time.—And you, my masters," addressing the archers and the rest of the party, "methinks it would be as fitting and seeming if you reined back your steeds for a horse's length or so, since I apprehend you can travel on your way without the pastime of minstrelsy." The bowmen took the hint, and fell back, but, as was expressed by their grumbling observations, by no means pleased that there seemed little chance of their overhearing what conversation should pass between the young knight and the minstrel, which proceeded as follows:—

"I am, then, to understand, good minstrel," said the knight, "that you, who have in your time borne arms, and even followed Saint George's red-cross banner to the Holy Sepulchre, are so little tired of the danger attending this profession, that you feel yourself attracted unnecessarily to regions where the sword, for ever loose in its scabbard, is ready to start on the slightest provocation?"

"It would be hard," replied the minstrel bluntly, "to answer such a question in the affirmative; and

MODERN CASTLE OF DOUGLAS; LANARKSHIRE.

yet, when you consider how nearly allied is his profession who celebrates deeds of arms with that of the knight who performs them, your honour, I think, will hold it advisable that a minstrel desirous of doing his devoir, should, like a young knight, seek the truth of adventures where it is to be found, and rather visit countries where the knowledge is preserved of high and noble deeds, than those lazy and quiet realms, in which men live indolently, and die ignobly in peace, or by sentence of law. You yourself, sir, and those like you, who hold life cheap in respect of glory, guide your course through this world on the very same principle which brings your poor rhyming servant Bertram from a far province of merry England, to this dark country of rugged Scotland called Douglas Dale. You long to see adventures worthy of notice, and I (under favour for naming us two in the same breath) seek a scanty and precarious, but not a dishonourable living, by preparing for immortality, as well as I can, the particulars of such exploits, especially the names of those who were the heroes of these actions. Each, therefore, labours in his vocation; nor can the one be justly wondered at more than the other, seeing that if there be any difference in the degrees of danger to which both the hero and the poet are exposed, the courage, strength, arms, and address of the valiant knight, render it safer for him to venture into scenes of peril, than for the poor man of rhyme."

"You say well," answered the warrior; "and although it is something of novelty to me to hear your craft represented as upon a level with my own mode

of life, yet shame were it to say that the minstrel who toils so much to keep in memory the feats of gallant knights, should not himself prefer fame to existence, and a single achievement of valour to a whole age without a name, or to affirm that he follows a mean and unworthy profession."

"Your worship will then acknowledge," said the minstrel, "that it is a legitimate object in such as myself, who, simple as I am, have taken my regular degrees among the professors of the *gay science* at the capital town of Aigues-Mortes, to struggle forward into this northern district, where I am well assured many things have happened which have been adapted to the harp by minstrels of great fame in ancient days, and have become the subject of lays which lie deposited in the library of Castle Douglas, where, unless copied over by some one who understands the old British characters and language, they must, with whatever they may contain, whether of entertainment or edification, be speedily lost to posterity. If these hidden treasures were preserved and recorded by the minstrel art of my poor self and others, it might be held well to compensate for the risk of a chance blow of a broadsword, or the sweep of a brown bill, received while I am engaged in collecting them; and I were unworthy of the name of a man, much more of an inventor or finder,* should I weigh the loss of life, a commodity always so uncertain, against the chance of that immortality which

* The name of Maker stands for *Poet* (with the original sense of which word it exactly corresponds) in the old Scottish language. That of *Trouveur* or Troubadour—Finder, in short—

will survive in my lay after my broken voice and shivered harp shall no longer be able either to express tune or accompany tale."

"Certainly," said Sir Aymer, "having a heart to feel such a motive, you have an undoubted right to express it; nor should I have been in any degree disposed to question it had I found many minstrels prepared, like yourself, to prefer renown even to life itself, which most men think of greatly more consequence."

"There are, indeed, noble sir," replied Bertram, "minstrels, and, with your reverence, even belted knights themselves, who do not sufficiently value that renown which is acquired at the risk of life. To such ignoble men we must leave their own reward—let us abandon to them earth, and the things of earth, since they cannot aspire to that glory which is the *best* reward of others."

The minstrel uttered these last words with such enthusiasm, that the knight drew his bridle, and stood fronting Bertram, with his countenance kindling at the same theme, on which, after a short silence, he expressed himself with a like vivacity.

"Well fare thy heart, gay companion! I am happy to see there is still so much enthusiasm surviving in the world. Thou hast fairly won the minstrel groat; and if I do not pay it in conformity to my sense of thy merit, it shall be the fault of dame Fortune, who has graced my labours in these Scottish wars with

has a similar meaning, and almost in every country the poetical tribes have been graced with the same epithets, inferring the property of those who employ invention or creation.

the niggard pay of Scottish money. A gold piece or two there must be remaining of the ransom of one French knight, whom chance threw into my hands, and that, my friend, shall surely be thine own; and hark thee, I, Aymer de Valence, who now speak to thee, am born of the noble House of Pembroke; and though now landless, shall, by the grace of Our Lady, have in time a fitting establishment, wherein I will find room for a minstrel like thee, if thy talents have not by that time found thee a better patron."

"Thank thee, noble knight," said the minstrel, "as well for thy present intentions, as I hope I shall for thy future performance; but I may say, with truth, that I have not the sordid inclination of many of my brethren."

"He who partakes the true thirst of noble fame," said the young knight, "can have little room in his heart for the love of gold. But thou hast not yet told me, friend minstrel, what are the motives, in particular, which have attracted thy wandering steps to this wild country?"

"Were I to do so," replied Bertram, rather desirous to avoid the question, as in some respects too nearly bordering on the secret purpose of his journey, "it might sound like a studied panegyric on thine own bold deeds, Sir Knight, and those of your companions in arms; and such adulation, minstrel as I am, I hate like an empty cup at a companion's lips. But let me say in few words, that Douglas Castle, and the deeds of valour which it has witnessed, have sounded wide through England; nor is there a gallant knight or trusty minstrel, whose heart does

not throb at the name of the stronghold, which, in former days, the foot of an Englishman never entered, except in hospitality. There is a magic in the very names of Sir John de Walton and Sir Aymer de Valence, the gallant defenders of a place so often won back by its ancient lords, and with such circumstances of valour and cruelty, that it bears, in England, the name of the Dangerous Castle."

"Yet I would fain hear," answered the knight, "your own minstrel account of those legends which have induced you, for the amusement of future times, to visit a country which, at this period, is so distracted and perilous."

"If you can endure the length of a minstrel tale," said Bertram—"I for one am always amused by the exercise of my vocation, and have no objection to tell my story, provided you do not prove an impatient listener."

"Nay, for that matter," said the young knight, "a fair listener thou shalt have of me; and if my reward be not great, my attention at least shall be remarkable."

"And he," said the minstrel, "must be a poor gleeman who does not hold himself better paid with that, than with gold or silver, were the pieces English rose-nobles. On this condition, then, I begin a long story, which may, in one or other of its details, find subject for better minstrels than myself, and be listened to by such warriors as you hundreds of years hence."

CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

While many a merry lay and many a song
Cheer'd the rough road, we wish'd the rough road long;
The rough road then returning in a round,
Mark'd their impatient steps, for all was fairy ground.

DR. JOHNSON.

"IT was about the year of redemption one thousand two hundred and eighty-five years," began the minstrel, "when King Alexander the Third of Scotland lost his daughter Margaret, whose only child of the same name, called the Maiden of Norway, (as her father was king of that country,) became the heiress of this kingdom of Scotland, as well as of her father's crown. An unhappy death was this for Alexander, who had no nearer heirs left of his own body than this grandchild. She indeed might claim his kingdom by birthright; but the difficulty of establishing such a claim of inheritance must have been anticipated by all who bestowed a thought upon the subject. The Scottish king, therefore, endeavoured to make up for his loss by replacing his late queen, who was an English princess, sister of our Edward the First, with Juletta, daughter of the Count de Dreux. The solemnities at the nuptial ceremony, which took place in the town of Jedburgh, were very great and remarkable, and particularly when, amidst the display of a pageant which was exhibited on the occasion, a

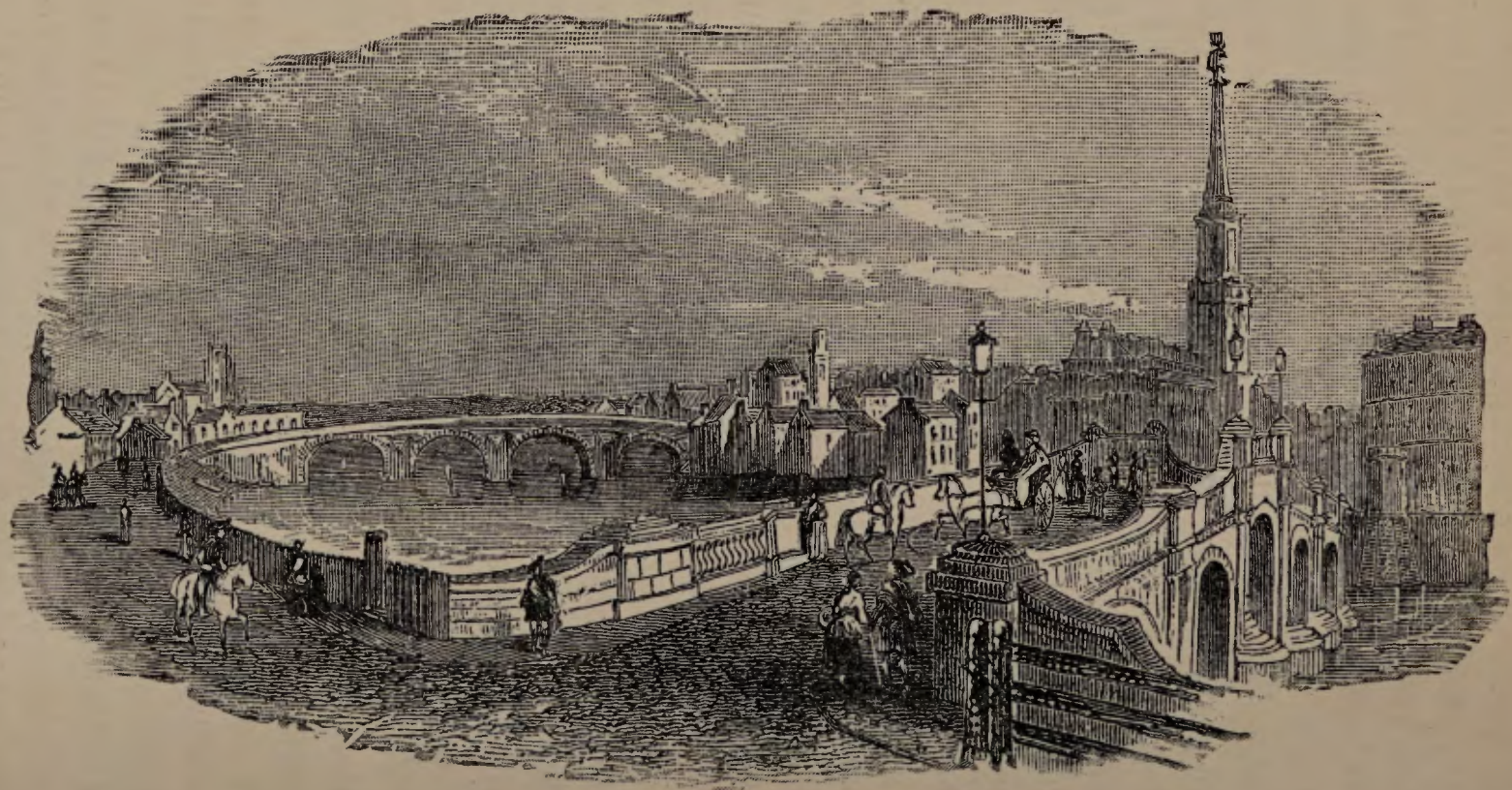
ghastly spectre made its appearance in the form of a skeleton, as the King of Terrors is said to be represented.—Your worship is free to laugh at this, if you think it a proper subject for mirth; but men are alive who viewed it with their own eyes, and the event shewed too well of what misfortunes this apparition was the singular prognostication."

"I have heard the story," said the knight; "but the monk who told it me, suggested that the figure, though unhappily chosen, was perhaps purposely introduced as a part of the pageant."

"I know not that," said the minstrel dryly; "but there is no doubt that shortly after this apparition King Alexander died, to the great sorrow of his people. The Maid of Norway, his heiress, speedily followed her grandfather to the grave, and our English king, Sir Knight, raked up a claim of dependency and homage due, he said, by Scotland, which neither the lawyers, nobles, priests, nor the very minstrels of Scotland, had ever before heard of."

"Now, beshrew me," interrupted Sir Aymer de Valence, "this is beyond bargain. I agreed to hear your tale with patience, but I did not pledge myself that it should contain matter to the reproach of Edward the First, of blessed memory; nor will I permit his name to be mentioned in my hearing without the respect due to his high rank and noble qualities."

"Nay," said the minstrel, "I am no Highland bagpiper or genealogist, to carry respect for my art so far as to quarrel with a man of worship who stops me at the beginning of a pibroch. I am an Englishman,



"THE TWA BRIGGS."

and wish dearly well to my country; and, above all, I must speak the truth. But I will avoid disputable topics. Your age, sir, though none of the ripest, authorizes me to suppose you may have seen the battle of Falkirk, and other onslaughts in which the competition of Bruce and Baliol has been fiercely agitated, and you will permit me to say, that if the Scottish have not had the right upon their side, they have at least defended the wrong with the efforts of brave men and true."

"Of brave men, I grant you," said the knight; "for I have seen no cowards amongst them; but as for truth, they can best judge of it who know how often they have sworn faith to England, and how repeatedly they have broken their vow."

"I shall not stir the question," said the minstrel, "leaving it to your worship to determine which has most falsehood—he who compels a weaker person to take an unjust oath, or he who, compelled by necessity, takes the imposed oath without the intention of keeping his word."

"Nay, nay," said De Valence, "let us keep our opinions, for we are not likely to force each other from the faith we have adopted on this subject. But take my advice, and whilst thou travellest under an English pennon, take heed that thou keepest off this conversation in the hall and kitchen, where perhaps the soldier may be less tolerant than the officer; and now, in a word, what is thy legend of this Dangerous Castle?"

"For that," replied Bertram, "methinks your worship is most likely to have a better edition than I,

who have not been in this country for many years; but it is not for me to bandy opinions with your knightship. I will even proceed with the tale as I have heard it. I need not, I presume, inform your worship that the Lords of Douglas, who founded this castle, are second to no lineage in Scotland in the antiquity of their descent. Nay, they have themselves boasted that their family is not to be seen or distinguished, like other great houses, until it is found at once in a certain degree of eminence. 'You may see us in the tree,' they say, 'you cannot discover us in the twig; you may see us in the stream, you cannot trace us to the fountain.' In a word, they deny that historians or genealogists can point out the first mean man named Douglas, who originally elevated the family; and true it is, that so far back as we have known this race, they have always been renowned for valour and enterprise, accompanied with the power which made that enterprise effectual."

"Enough," said the knight, "I have heard of the pride and power of that great family, nor does it interest me in the least to deny or detract from their bold claims to consideration in this respect."

"Without doubt you must also have heard, noble sir," replied the minstrel, "many things of James, the present heir of the house of Douglas?"

"More than enough," answered the English knight; "he is known to have been a stout supporter of that outlawed traitor, William Wallace; and again, upon the first raising of the banner by this Robert Bruce, who pretends to be King of Scotland, this young springald, James Douglas, must needs start

into rebellion anew. He plunders his uncle, the Archbishop of Saint Andrews, of a considerable sum of money, to fill the Scottish Usurper's not over-burdened treasury, debauches the servants of his relation, takes arms, and though repeatedly chastised in the field, still keeps his vaunt, and threatens mischief to those, who, in the name of his rightful sovereign, defend the Castle of Douglasdale."

"It is your pleasure to say so, Sir Knight," replied Bertram; "yet I am sure, were you a Scot, you would with patience hear me tell over what has been said of this young man by those who have known him, and whose account of his adventures shews how differently the same tale may be told. These men talk of the present heir of this ancient family as fully adequate to maintain and augment its reputation; ready, indeed, to undergo every peril in the cause of Robert the Bruce, because the Bruce is esteemed by him his lawful king; and sworn and devoted, with such small strength as he can muster, to revenge himself on those Southrons who have, for several years, as he thinks, unjustly, possessed themselves of his father's abode."

"O," replied Sir Aymer de Valence, "we have heard much of his achievements in this respect, and of his threats against our governor and ourselves; yet we think it scarce likely that Sir John de Walton will move from Douglasdale without the King's order, although this James Douglas, a mere chicken, take upon himself to crack his voice by crowing like a cock of the game."

"Sir," answered Bertram, "our acquaintance is

but brief, and yet I feel it has been so beneficial to me, that I trust there is no harm in hoping that James Douglas and you may never meet in bodily presence till the state of the two countries shall admit of peace being between you."

"Thou art obliging, friend," answered Sir Aymer, "and, I doubt not, sincere; and truly thou seemest to have a wholesome sense of the respect due to this young knight, when men talk of him in his native valley of Douglas. For me, I am only poor Aymer of Valence, without an acre of land, or much hope of acquiring any, unless I cut something huge with my broadsword out of the middle of these hills. Only this, good minstrel, if thou livest to tell my story, may I pray thee to use thy scrupulous custom of searching out the verity, and whether I live or die thou shalt not, I think, discover that thy late acquaintance of a spring morning hath added more to the laurels of James of Douglas, than any man's death must give to him by whose stronger arm, or more lucky chance, it is his lot to fall."

"I nothing fear you, Sir Knight," said the minstrel; "for yours is that happy brain, which, bold in youth as beseems a young knight, is in more advanced life the happy source of prudent counsel, of which I would not, by an early death, wish thy country to be deprived."

"Thou art so candid, then, as to wish Old England the benefit of good advice," said Sir Aymer, "though thou leanest to the side of Scotland in the controversy?"

"Assuredly, Sir Knight," said the minstrel, "since

in wishing that Scotland and England each knew their own true interest, I am bound to wish them both alike well; and they should, I think, desire to live in friendship together. Occupying each their own portion of the same island, and living under the same laws, and being at peace with each other, they might, without fear, face the enmity of the whole world."

"If thy faith be so liberal," answered the knight, "as becomes a good man, thou must certainly pray, Sir Minstrel, for the success of England in the war, by which alone these murderous hostilities of the northern nation can end in a solid peace. The rebellions of this obstinate country are but the struggles of the stag when he is mortally wounded; the animal grows weaker and weaker with every struggle, till his resistance is effectually tamed by the hand of death."

"Not so, Sir Knight," said the minstrel; "if my creed is well taught me, we ought not so to pray. We may, without offence, intimate in our prayers, the end we wish to obtain; but it is not for us, poor mortals, to point out to an all-seeing Providence the precise manner in which our petitions are to be accomplished, or to wish the downfall of a country to end its commotions, as the death-stab terminates the agonies of the wounded stag. Whether I appeal to my heart or to my understanding, the dictate would be to petition Heaven for what is just and equal in the case; and if I should fear for thee, Sir Knight, in an encounter with James of Douglas, it is only because he upholds, as I conceive, the better side of

the debate; and powers more than earthly have presaged to him success."

"Do you tell me so, Sir Minstrel," said De Valence, in a threatening tone, "knowing me and my office?"

"Your personal dignity and authority," said Bertram, "cannot change the right into wrong, or avert what Providence has decreed to take place. You know, I must presume, that the Douglas hath, by various devices, already contrived to make himself master of this Castle of Douglas three several times, and that Sir John de Walton, the present governor, holds it with a garrison trebled in force, and under the assurance that if, without surprise, he should keep it from the Scottish power for a year and a day, he shall obtain the barony of Douglas, with its extensive appendages, in free property for his reward; while, on the other hand, if he shall suffer the fortress during this space to be taken, either by guile or by open force, as has happened successively to the holders of the Dangerous Castle, he will become liable to dishonour as a knight, and to attainder as a subject; and the chiefs who take share with him, and serve under him, will participate also in his guilt and his punishment?"

"All this I know well," said Sir Aymer; "and I only wonder that, having become public, the conditions have, nevertheless, been told with so much accuracy; but what has this to do with the issue of the combat, if the Douglas and I should chance to meet? I will not, surely, be disposed to fight with less animation because I wear my fortune upon my sword, or become coward because I fight for a portion of the

Douglas's estate, as well as for fame and for fatherland? And after all——"

"Hear me," said the minstrel; "an ancient gleeman has said, that in a false quarrel there is no true valour, and the *los* or praise won therein, is, when balanced against honest fame, as valueless as a wreath formed out of copper, compared to a chaplet of pure gold; but I bid you not take me for thy warrant in this important question. Thou well knowest how James of Thirlwall, the last English commander before Sir John de Walton, was surprised, and the castle sacked with circumstances of great inhumanity."

"Truly," said Sir Aymer, "I think that Scotland and England both have heard of that onslaught, and of the disgusting proceedings of the Scottish chieftain, when he caused transport into the wild forest gold, silver, ammunition, and armour, and all things that could be easily removed, and destroyed a large quantity of provisions in a manner equally savage and unheard-of."

"Perhaps, Sir Knight," said Bertram, "you were yourself an eye-witness of that transaction, which has been spoken of far and wide, and is called the Douglas Larder?"

"I saw not the actual accomplishment of the deed," said De Valence; "that is, I witnessed it not a-doing, but I beheld enough of the sad relics to make the Douglas Larder never by me to be forgotten as a record of horror and abomination. I would speak it truly, by the hand of my father and by my honour as a knight! and I will leave it to thee to judge whe-

ther it was a deed calculated to secure the smiles of Heaven in favour of the actors. This is my edition of the story :—

"A large quantity of provisions had during two years or thereabouts been collected from different points, and the Castle of Douglas, newly repaired, and, as was thought, carefully guarded, was appointed as the place where the said provisions were to be put in store for the service of the King of England, or of the Lord Clifford, whichever should first enter the Western Marches with an English army, and stand in need of such a supply. This army was also to relieve our wants—I mean those of my uncle, the Earl of Pembroke, who for some time before had lain with a considerable force in the town called Ayr, near the old Caledonian Forest, and where we had hot wars with the insurgent Scots. Well, sir, it happened, as in similar cases, that Thirlwall, though a bold and active soldier, was surprised in the Castle of Douglas, about Hallowmass, by this same worthy, young James Douglas. In no very good humour was he, as you may suppose; for his father, called William the Hardy, or William Longlegs, having refused, on any terms, to become Anglocised, was made a lawful prisoner, and died as such, closely confined in Berwick, or, as some say, in Newcastle. The news of his father's death had put young Douglas into no small rage, and tended, I think, to suggest what he did in his resentment. Embarrassed by the quantity of provisions which he found in the castle, which, the English being superior in the country, he had neither the means to remove, nor the leisure to

stay and consume, the fiend, as I think, inspired him with a contrivance to render them unfit for human use. You shall judge yourself whether it was likely to be suggested by a good or an evil spirit.

"According to this device, the gold, silver, and other transportable commodities being carried to secret places of safety, Douglas caused the meat, the malt, and other corn or grain, to be brought down into the castle cellar, where he emptied the contents of the sacks into one loathsome heap, striking out the heads of the barrels and puncheons, so as to let the mingled drink run through the heap of meal, grain, and so forth. The bullocks provided for slaughter were in like manner knocked on the head, and their blood suffered to drain into the mass of edible substances; and lastly, the flesh of these oxen was buried in the same mass, in which was also included the dead bodies of those in the castle, who, receiving no quarter from the Douglas, paid dear enough for having kept no better watch. This base and unworthy abuse of provisions intended for the use of man, together with throwing into the well of the castle carcases of men and horses, and other filth for polluting the same, has since that time been called the DOUGLAS LARDER."

"I pretend not, good Sir Aymer," said the minstrel, "to vindicate what you justly reprove, nor can I conceive any mode of rendering provisions arranged after the form of the Douglas Larder, proper for the use of any Christian; yet this young gentleman might perhaps act under the sting of natural resentment, rendering his singular exploit more excusable

than it may seem at first. Think, if your own noble father had just died in a lingering captivity, his inheritance seized upon, and occupied as a garrison by a foreign enemy, would not these things stir you to a mode of resentment, which in cold blood, and judging of it as the action of an enemy, your honour might hold in natural and laudable abhorrence?—Would you pay respect to dead and senseless objects, which no one could blame your appropriating to your own use, or even scruple the refusal of quarter to prisoners, which is so often practised even in wars which are otherwise termed fair and humane?"

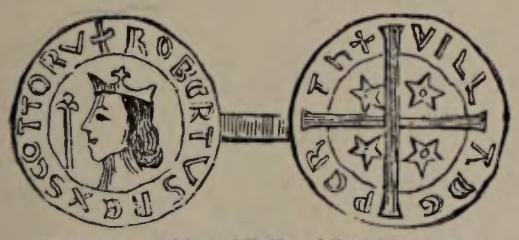
"You press me close, minstrel," said Aymer de Valence. "I at least have no great interest to excuse the Douglas in this matter, since its consequences were, that I myself, and the rest of my uncle's host, laboured with Clifford and his army to rebuild this same Dangerous Castle; and feeling no stomach for the cheer that the Douglas had left us, we suffered hard commons, though I acknowledge we did not hesitate to adopt for our own use such sheep and oxen as the miserable Scots had still left around their farm-houses; and I jest not, Sir Minstrel, when I acknowledge in sad earnest, that we martial men ought to make our petitions with peculiar penitence to Heaven for mercy, when we reflect on the various miseries which the nature of our profession compels us to inflict on each other."

"It seems to me," answered the minstrel, "that those who feel the stings of their own conscience should be more lenient when they speak of the offences of others; nor do I greatly rely on a sort of

prophecy which was delivered, as the men of this hill district say, to the young Douglas, by a man who in the course of nature should have been long since dead, promising him a course of success against the English for having sacrificed his own castle to prevent their making it a garrison."

"We have time enough for the story," said Sir Aymer, "and methinks it would suit a knight and a minstrel better than the grave converse we have hitherto held, which would have beseemed—so God save me—the mouths of two travelling friars."

"So be it," said the minstrel; "the rote or the viol easily changes its time and varies its note."



PENNY OF ALEXANDER III.

CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

A tale of sorrow, for your eyes may weep;
A tale of horror, for your flesh may tingle;
A tale of wonder, for the eyebrows arch,
And the flesh curdles if you read it rightly.

OLD PLAY.

"YOUR honour must be informed, gentle Sir Aymer de Valence, that I have heard this story told at a great distance from the land in which it happened, by a sworn minstrel, the ancient friend and servant of the house of Douglas, one of the best, it is said, who ever belonged to that noble family. This minstrel, Hugo Hugonet by name, attended his young master when on this fierce exploit, as was his wont.

"The castle was in total tumult; in one corner the war-men were busy breaking up and destroying provisions; in another, they were slaying men, horses, and cattle, and these actions were accompanied with appropriate sounds. The cattle, particularly, had become sensible of their impending fate, and with awkward resistance and piteous cries, testified that seluctiance with which these poor creatures look instinctively on the shambles. The groans and screams of men, undergoing, or about to undergo, the stroke of death, and the screeches of the poor horses which were in mortal agony, formed a fearful chorus. Hu-

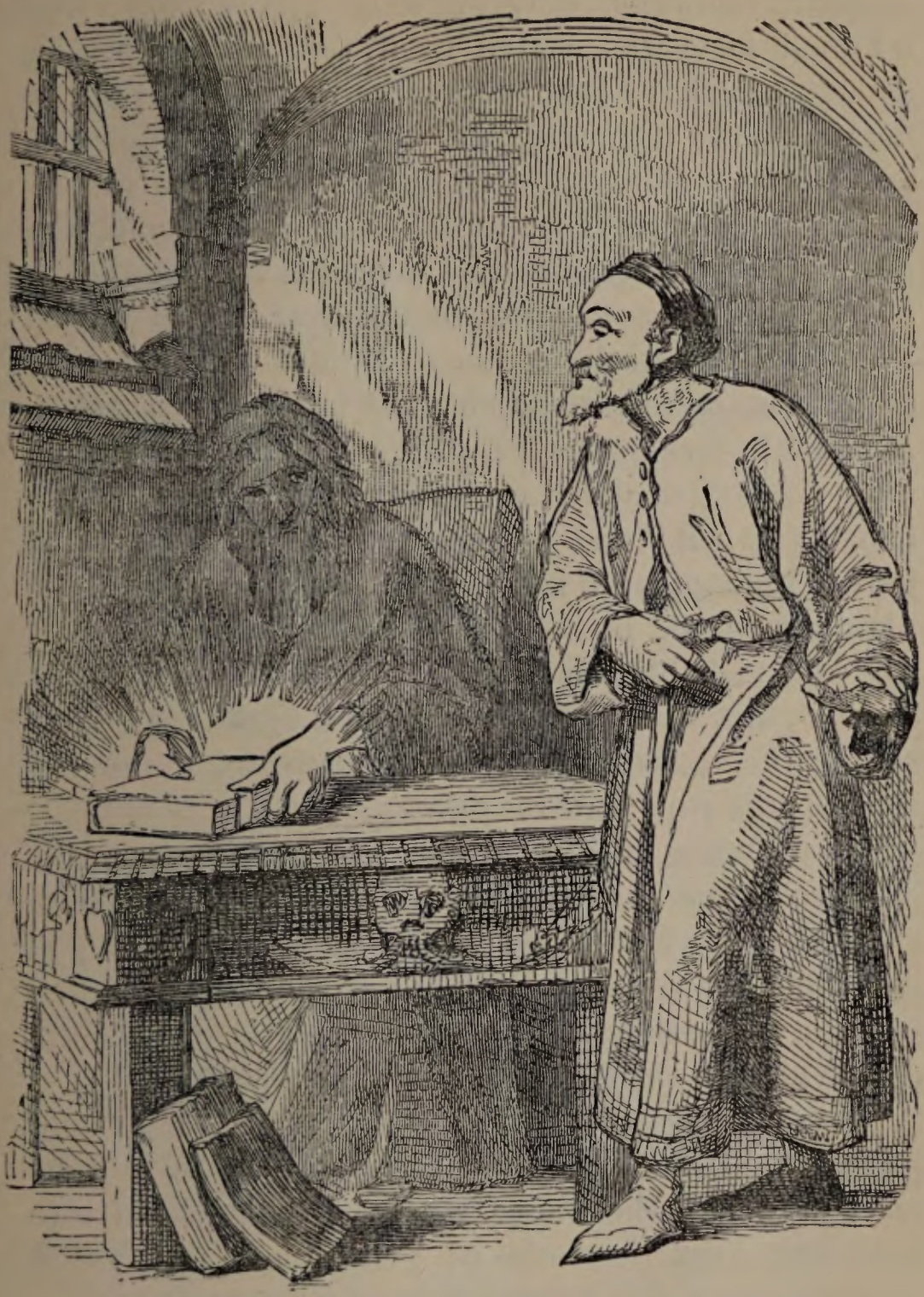
gonet was desirous to remove himself from such unpleasant sights and sounds; but his master, the Douglas, had been a man of some reading, and his old servant was anxious to secure a book of poetry, to which he had been attached of old. This contained the Lays of an ancient Scottish Bard, who, if an ordinary human creature while he was in this life, cannot now perhaps be exactly termed such.

"He was, in short, that Thomas, distinguished by the name of the Rhymer, and whose intimacy, it is said, became so great with the gifted people, called the Faëry folk, that he could, like them, foretell the future deed before it came to pass, and united in his own person the quality of bard and of soothsayer. But of late years he had vanished almost entirely from this mortal scene; and although the time and manner of his death were never publicly known, yet the general belief was, that he was not severed from the land of the living, but removed to the land of Faëry, from whence he sometimes made excursions, and concerned himself only about matters which were to come hereafter. Hugonet was the more earnest to prevent the loss of the works of this ancient bard, as many of his poems and predictions were said to be preserved in the castle, and were supposed to contain much especially connected with the old house of Douglas, as well as other families of ancient descent, who had been subjects of this old man's prophecy; and accordingly he determined to save this volume from destruction in the general conflagration to which the building was about to be consigned by the heir of its ancient proprietors. With

this view he hurried up into the little old vaulted room, called 'the Douglas's study,' in which there might be some dozen old books written by the ancient chaplains, in what the minstrels call *the letter black.* He immediately discovered the celebrated lay, called Sir Tristrem, which has been so often altered and abridged as to bear little resemblance to the original. Hugonet, who well knew the value in which this poem was held by the ancient lords of the castle, took the parchment volume from the shelves of the library, and laid it upon a small desk adjacent to the Baron's chair. Having made such preparation for putting it in safety, he fell into a brief reverie, in which the decay of light, and the preparations for the Douglas Larder, but especially the last sight of objects which had been familiar to his eyes, now on the eve of destruction, engaged him at that moment.

"The bard, therefore, was thinking within himself upon the uncommon mixture of the mystical scholar and warrior in his old master, when, as he bent his eyes upon the book of the ancient Rhymer, he was astonished to observe it slowly removed from the desk on which it lay by an invisible hand. The old man looked with horror at the spontaneous motion of the book, for the safety of which he was interested, and had the courage to approach a little nearer the table, in order to discover by what means it had been withdrawn.

"I have said the room was already becoming dark, so as to render it difficult to distinguish any person in the chair, though it now appeared, on



THE APPARITION IN THE STUDY.

closer examination, that a kind of shadowy outline of a human form was seated in it, but neither precise enough to convey its exact figure to the mind, nor so detailed as to intimate distinctly its mode of action. The Bard of Douglas, therefore, gazed upon the object of his fear, as if he had looked upon something not mortal; nevertheless, as he gazed more intently, he became more capable of discovering the object which offered itself to his eyes, and they grew by degrees more keen to penetrate what they witnessed. A tall thin form, attired in, or rather shaded with, a long flowing dusky robe, having a face and physiognomy so wild and overgrown with hair as to be hardly human, were the only marked outlines of the phantom; and, looking more attentively, Hugonet was still sensible of two other forms, the outlines, it seemed, of a hart and a hind, which appeared half to shelter themselves behind the person and under the robe of this supernatural figure."

"A probable tale," said the knight, "for you, Sir Minstrel, a man of sense as you seem to be, to recite so gravely! From what wise authority have you had this tale, which, though it might pass well enough amid clanging beakers, must be held quite apocryphal in the sober hours of the morning?"

"By my minstrel word, Sir Knight," answered Bertram, "I am no propagator of the fable, if it be one; Hugonet, the violer, when he had retired into a cloister near the Lake of Pembelmere in Wales, communicated the story to me as I now tell it. Therefore, as it was upon the authority of an eye-witness, I apologize not for relating it to you, since

I could hardly discover a more direct source of knowledge."

"Be it so, Sir Minstrel," said the knight; "tell on thy tale, and may thy legend escape criticism from others as well as from me."

"Hugonet, Sir Knight," answered Bertram, "was a holy man, and maintained a fair character during his whole life, notwithstanding his trade may be esteemed a light one. The vision spoke to him in an antique language, like that formerly used in the kingdom of Strath-Clyde, being a species of Scots or Gaelic, which few would have comprehended.

"'You are a learned man,' said the apparition, 'and not unacquainted with the dialects used in your country formerly, although they are now out of date, and you are obliged to translate them into the vulgar Saxon of Deira or Northumberland; but highly must an ancient British bard prize one in this "remote term of time," who sets upon the poetry of his native country a value which invites him to think of its preservation at a moment of such terror as influences the present evening.'

"'It is, indeed,' said Hugonet, 'a night of terror, that calls even the dead from the grave, and makes them the ghastly and fearful companions of the living—Who or what art thou, in God's name, who breakest the bounds which divide them, and revisitest thus strangely the state thou hast so long bid adieu to?'

"'I am,' replied the vision, 'that celebrated Thomas the Rhymer, by some called Thomas of Erceldoun, or Thomas the True Speaker. Like other sages, I am

permitted at times to revisit the scenes of my former life, nor am I incapable of removing the shadowy clouds and darkness which overhang futurity; and know, thou afflicted man, that what thou now seest in this woful country, is not a general emblem of what shall therein befall hereafter, but in proportion as the Douglasses are now suffering the loss and destruction of their home for their loyalty to the rightful heir of the Scottish kingdom, so hath Heaven appointed for them a just reward; and as they have not spared to burn and destroy their own house and that of their fathers in the Bruce's cause, so is it the doom of Heaven, that as often as the walls of Douglas Castle shall be burnt to the ground, they shall be again rebuilt still more stately and more magnificent than before.'

"A cry was now heard like that of a multitude in the court-yard, joining in a fierce shout of exultation; at the same time a broad and ruddy glow seemed to burst from the beams and rafters, and sparks flew from them as from the smith's stithy, while the element caught to its fuel, and the conflagration broke its way through every aperture.

"'See ye that?' said the vision, casting his eye towards the windows and disappearing—'Begone! The fated hour of removing this book is not yet come, nor are thine the destined hands. But it will be safe where I have placed it, and the time of its removal shall come.' The voice was heard after the form had vanished, and the brain of Hugonet almost turned round at the wild scene which he beheld; his utmost exertion was scarcely sufficient to withdraw

him from the terrible spot, and Douglas Castle that night sunk into ashes and smoke, to arise, in no great length of time, in a form stronger than ever." The minstrel stopt, and his hearer, the English knight, remained silent for some minutes ere at length he replied.

"It is true, minstrel," answered Sir Aymer, "that your tale is so far undeniable, that this castle—three times burned down by the heir of the house and of the barony—has hitherto been as often reared again by Henry Lord Clifford, and other generals of the English, who endeavoured on every occasion to build it up more artificially and more strongly than it had formerly existed, since it occupies a position too important to the safety of our Scottish border to permit our yielding it up. This I myself have partly witnessed. But I cannot think, that because the castle has been so destroyed, it is therefore decreed so to be repaired in future, considering that such cruelties, as surely cannot meet the approbation of Heaven, have attended the feats of the Douglasses. But I see thou art determined to keep thine own faith, nor can I blame thee, since the wonderful turns of fate which have attended this fortress, are sufficient to warrant any one to watch for what seem the peculiar indications of the will of Heaven; but thou mayest believe, good minstrel, that the fault shall not be mine, if the young Douglas shall have opportunity to exercise his cookery upon a second edition of his family larder, or to profit by the predictions of Thomas the Rhymer."

"I do not doubt due circumspection upon your

own part and Sir John de Walton's," said Bertram: "but there is no crime in my saying that Heaven can accomplish its own purposes. I look upon Douglas Castle as in some degree a fated place, and I long to see what changes time may have made in it during the currency of twenty years. Above all, I desire to secure, if possible, the volume of this Thomas of Erceldoun, having in it such a fund of forgotten minstrelsy, and of prophecies respecting the future fates of the British kingdom, both northern and southern."

The knight made no answer, but rode a little space forward, keeping the upper part of the ridge of the water, by which the road down the vale seemed to be rather sharply conducted. It at length attained the summit of an acclivity of considerable length. From this point, and behind a conspicuous rock, which appeared to have been pushed aside, as it were, like the scene of a theatre, to admit a view of the under part of the valley, the travellers beheld the extensive vale, parts of which have been already shewn in detail, but which, as the river became narrower, was now entirely laid bare in its height and depth as far as it extended, and displayed in its precincts, at a little distance from the course of the stream, the towering and lordly castle to which it gave the name. The mist which continued to encumber the valley with its fleecy clouds, shewed imperfectly the rude fortifications which served to defend the small town of Douglas, which was strong enough to repel a desultory attack, but not to withstand what was called in those days a

formal siege. The most striking feature was its church, an ancient Gothic pile raised on an eminence in the centre of the town, and even then extremely ruinous. To the left, and lying in the distance, might be seen other towers and battlements; and, divided from the town by a piece of artificial water, which extended almost around it, arose the Dangerous Castle of Douglas.

Sternly was it fortified, after the fashion of the middle ages, with donjon and battlements; displaying, above others, the tall tower, which bore the name of Lord Henry's, or the Clifford's Tower.

"Yonder is the castle," said Aymer de Valence, extending his arm with a smile of triumph upon his brow; "thou mayst judge thyself, whether the defences added to it under the Clifford are likely to render its next capture a more easy deed than the last."

The minstrel barely shook his head, and quoted from the Psalmist—"*Nisi Dominus custodiet.*" Nor did he prosecute the discourse, though De Valence answered eagerly, "My own edition of the text is not very different from thine; but, methinks, thou art more spiritually-minded than can always be predicated of a wandering minstrel."

"God knows," said Bertram, "that if I, or such as I, are forgetful of the finger of Providence in accomplishing its purposes in this lower world, we have heavier blame than that of other people, since we are perpetually called upon, in the exercise of our fanciful profession, to admire the turns of fate which bring good out of evil, and which render those who

think only of their own passions and purposes the executors of the will of Heaven."

"I do submit to what you say, Sir Minstrel," answered the knight, "and it would be unlawful to express any doubt of the truths which you speak so solemnly, any more than of your own belief in them. Let me add, sir, that I think I have power enough in this garrison to bid you welcome, and Sir John de Walton, I hope, will not refuse access to hall, castle, or knight's bower, to a person of your profession, and by whose conversation we shall, perhaps, profit somewhat. I cannot, however, lead you to expect such indulgence for your son, considering the present state of his health; but if I procure him the privilege to remain at the convent of Saint Bride, he will be there unmolested and in safety, until you have renewed your acquaintance with Douglas Dale and its history, and are disposed to set forward on your journey."

"I embrace your honour's proposal the more willingly," said the minstrel, "that I can recompense the Father Abbot."

"A main point with holy men or women," replied De Valence, "who, in time of warfare, subsist by affording the visitors of their shrine the means of maintenance in their cloisters for a passing season."

The party now approached the sentinels on guard at the castle, who were closely and thickly stationed, and who respectfully admitted Sir Aymer de Valence, as next in command under Sir John de Walton. Fabian—for so was the young squire named who attended on De Valence—mentioned it as his

master's pleasure that the minstrel should also be admitted.

An old archer, however, looked hard at the minstrel as he followed Sir Aymer. "It is not for us," said he, "or any of our degree, to oppose the pleasure of Sir Aymer de Valence, nephew to the Earl of Pembroke, in such a matter; and for us, Master Fabian, welcome are you to make the gleeman your companion both at bed and board, as well as your visitant, a week or two at the Castle of Douglas; but your worship is well aware of the strict order of watch laid upon us, and if Solomon King of Israel were to come here as a travelling minstrel, by my faith I durst not give him entrance, unless I had positive authority from Sir John de Walton."

"Do you doubt, sirrah," said Sir Aymer de Valence, who returned on hearing an altercation betwixt Fabian and the archer—"do you doubt that I have good authority to entertain a guest, or do you presume to contest it?"

"Heaven forbid!" said the old man, "that I should presume to place my own desire in opposition to your worship, who has so lately and so honourably acquired your spurs; but in this matter I must think what will be the wish of Sir John de Walton, who is your governor, Sir Knight, as well as mine; and so far I hold it worth while to detain your guest until Sir John return from a ride to the outposts of the castle; and this, I conceive, being my duty, will be no matter of offence to your worship."

"Methinks," said the knight, "it is saucy in thee to suppose that my commands can have any thing in

them improper, or contradictory to those of Sir John de Walton; thou mayst trust to me at least that thou shalt come to no harm. Keep this man in the guard-room; let him not want good cheer, and when Sir John de Walton returns, report him as a person admitted by my invitation, and if any thing more be wanted to make out your excuse, I shall not be reluctant in stating it to the governor."

The archer made a signal of obedience with the pike which he held in his hand, and resumed the grave and solemn manner of a sentinel upon his post. He first, however, ushered in the minstrel, and furnished him with food and liquor, speaking at the same time to Fabian, who remained behind. The smart young stripling had become very proud of late, in consequence of obtaining the name of Sir Aymer's squire, and advancing a step in chivalry, as Sir Aymer himself had, somewhat earlier than the usual period, been advanced from squire to knight.

"I tell thee, Fabian," said the old archer, (whose gravity, sagacity, and skill in his vocation, while they gained him the confidence of all in the castle, subjected him, as he himself said, occasionally to the ridicule of the young coxcombs; and at the same time, we may add, rendered him somewhat pragmatic and punctilious towards those who stood higher than himself in birth and rank;) "I tell thee, Fabian, thou wilt do thy master, Sir Aymer, good service, if thou wilt give him a hint to suffer an old archer, man-at-arms, or such like, to give him a fair and civil answer respecting that which he com-

mands; for undoubtedly it is not in the first score of a man's years that he learns the various proper forms of military service; and Sir John de Walton, a most excellent commander no doubt, is one earnestly bent on pursuing the strict line of his duty, and will be rigorously severe, as well, believe me, with thy master as with a lesser person. Nay, he also possesses that zeal for his duty which induces him to throw blame, if there be the slightest ground for it, upon Aymer de Valence himself, although his uncle, the Earl of Pembroke, was Sir John de Walton's steady patron, and laid the beginning of his good fortune; for all which, by training up his nephew in the true discipline of the French wars, Sir John has taken the best way of shewing himself grateful to the old Earl."

"Be it as you will, old Gilbert Greenleaf," answered Fabian, "thou knowest I never quarrel with thy sermonizing, and therefore give me credit for submitting to many a lecture from Sir John de Walton and thyself; but thou drivest this a little too far, if thou canst not let a day pass without giving me a flogging. Credit me, Sir John de Walton will not thank thee, if thou term him one too old to remember that he himself had once some green sap in his veins. Ay, thus it is, the old man will not forget that he has once been young, nor the young that he must some day be old; and so the one changes his manners into the lingering formality of advanced age, and the other remains like a mid-summer torrent swollen with rain, every drop of water in it noise, froth, and overflow. There is a maxim for

thee, Gilbert!—Heardest thou ever better? hang it up amidst thy axioms of wisdom, and see if it will not pass among them like fifteen to the dozen. It will serve to bring thee off, man, when the wine-pot (thine only fault, good Gilbert) hath brought thee on occasion into something of a scrape."

"Best keep it for thyself, good Sir Squire," said the old man; "methinks it is more like to stand thyself one day in good stead. Who ever heard of a knight, or of the wood of which a knight is made, and that is a squire, being punished corporally like a poor old archer or horseboy? Your worst fault will be mended by some of these witty sayings, and your best service will scarce be rewarded more thankfully than by giving thee the name of Fabian the Fabler, or some such witty title."

Having unloosed his repartee to this extent, old Greenleaf resumed a certain acidity of countenance, which may be said to characterise those whose preferment hath become frozen under the influence of the slowness of its progress, and who display a general spleen against such as have obtained the advancement for which all are struggling, earlier, and, as they suppose, with less merit than their own. From time to time the eye of the old sentinel stole from the top of his pike, and with an air of triumph rested upon the young man Fabian, as if to see how deeply the wound had galled him, while at the same time he held himself on the alert to perform whatever mechanical duty his post might require. Both Fabian and his master were at the happy period of life when such discontent as that of the grave archer affected

them lightly, and, at the very worst, was considered as the jest of an old man and a good soldier; the more especially, as he was always willing to do the duty of his companions, and was much trusted by Sir John de Walton, who, though very much younger, had been bred up like Greenleaf in the wars of Edward the First, and was tenacious in upholding strict discipline, which since the death of that great monarch, had been considerably neglected by the young and warm-blooded valour of England.

Meantime it occurred to Sir Aymer de Valence, that though in displaying the usual degree of hospitality shewn to such a man as Bertram, he had merely done what was becoming his own rank, as one possessed of the highest honours of chivalry—the self-styled minstrel might not in reality be a man of that worth which he assumed. There was certainly something in his conversation, at least more grave, if not more austere, than was common to those of his calling; and when he recollected many points of Sir John de Walton's minuteness, a doubt arose in his mind, that the governor might not approve of his having introduced into the castle a person of Bertram's character, who was capable of making observations from which the garrison might afterwards feel much danger and inconvenience. Secretly, therefore, he regretted that he had not fairly intimated to the wandering minstrel, that his reception, or that of any stranger, within the Dangerous Castle, was not at present permitted by the circumstances of the times. In this case, the express line of his duty would have been his vindication, and instead, perhaps of dis-

countenance and blame, he would have had praise and honour from his superior.

With these thoughts passing through his mind, some tacit apprehension arose of a rebuke on the part of his commanding-officer; for this officer, notwithstanding his strictness, Sir Aymer loved as well as feared. He went, therefore, towards the guard-room of the castle, under the pretence of seeing that the rites of hospitality had been duly observed towards his late travelling companion. The minstrel arose respectfully, and from the manner in which he paid his compliments, seemed, if he had not expected this call of enquiry, at least to be in no degree surprised at it. Sir Aymer, on the other hand, assumed an air something more distant than he had yet used towards Bertram, and in reverting to his former invitation, he now so far qualified it as to say, that the minstrel knew that he was only second in command, and that effectual permission to enter the castle ought to be sanctioned by Sir John de Walton.

There is a civil way of seeming to believe any apology which people are disposed to receive in payment, without alleging suspicion of its currency. The minstrel, therefore, tendered his thanks for the civility which had so far been shewn to him. "It was a mere wish of passing curiosity," he said, "which, if not granted, could be attended with no consequences either inconvenient or disagreeable to him. Thomas of Erceldoun was, according to the Welsh triads, *one of the three bards of Britain*, who never stained a spear with blood, or was guilty either of taking or retaking castles and fortresses, and thus

far not a person likely, after death, to be suspected of such warlike feats. But I can easily conceive why Sir John de Walton should have allowed the usual rites of hospitality to fall into disuse, and why a man of public character like myself ought not to desire food or lodging where it is accounted so dangerous; and it can surprise no one why the governor did not even invest his worthy young lieutenant with the power of dispensing with so strict and unusual a rule."

These words, very coolly spoken, had something of the effect of affronting the young knight, as insinuating, that he was not held sufficiently trust-worthy by Sir John de Walton, with whom he had lived on terms of affection and familiarity, though the governor had attained his thirtieth year and upwards, and his lieutenant did not yet write himself one-and-twenty, the full age of chivalry having been in his case particularly dispensed with, owing to a feat of early manhood. Ere he had fully composed the angry thoughts which were chafing in his mind, the sound of a hunting bugle was heard at the gate, and from the sort of general stir which it spread through the garrison, it was plain that the governor had returned from his ride. Every sentinel, seemingly animated by his presence, shouldered his pike more uprightly, gave the word of the post more sharply, and seemed more fully awake and conscious of his duty. Sir John de Walton having alighted from his horse, asked Greenleaf what had passed during his absence; the old archer thought it his duty to say that a minstrel, who seemed like a Scotchman, or

wandering borderer, had been admitted into the castle, while his son, a lad sick of the pestilence so much talked of, had been left for a time at the Abbey of Saint Bride. This he said on Fabian's information. The archer added, that the father was a man of tale and song, who could keep the whole garrison amused, without giving them leave to attend to their own business.

"We want no such devices to pass the time," answered the governor; "and we would have been better satisfied if our lieutenant had been pleased to find us other guests, and fitter for a direct and frank communication, than one who, by his profession, is a detractor of God and a deceiver of man."

"Yet," said the old soldier, who could hardly listen even to his commander without indulging the humour of contradiction, "I have heard your honour intimate that the trade of a minstrel, when it is justly acted up to, is as worthy as even the degree of knighthood itself."

"Such it may have been in former days," answered the knight; "but in modern minstrelsy, the duty of rendering the art an incentive to virtue is forgotten, and it is well if the poetry which fired our fathers to noble deeds, does not now push on their children to such as are base and unworthy. But I will speak upon this to my friend Aymer, than whom I do not know a more excellent, or a more high-spirited young man."

While discoursing with the archer in this manner, Sir John de Walton, of a tall and handsome figure, advanced and stood within the ample arch of the

guard-room chimney, and was listened to in reverential silence by trusty Gilbert, who filled up with nods and signs, as an attentive auditor, the pauses in the conversation. The conduct of another hearer of what passed was not equally respectful, but from his position, he escaped observation.

This third person was no other than the squire Fabian, who was concealed from observation by his position behind the hob, or projecting portion of the old-fashioned fireplace, and hid himself yet more carefully when he heard the conversation between the governor and the archer turn to the prejudice, as he thought, of his master. The squire's employment at this time was the servile task of cleaning Sir Aymer's arms, which was conveniently performed by heating, upon the projection already specified, the pieces of steel armour for the usual thin coating of varnish. He could not, therefore, if he should be discovered, be considered as guilty of any thing insolent or disrespectful. He was better screened from view, as a thick smoke arose from a quantity of oak panelling, carved in many cases with the crest and achievements of the Douglas family, which being the fuel nearest at hand, lay smouldering in the chimney, and gathering to a blaze.

The governor, unconscious of this addition to his audience, pursued his conversation with Gilbert Greenleaf: "I need not tell you," he said, "that I am interested in the speedy termination of this siege or blockade, with which Douglas continues to threaten us; my own honour and affections are engaged in keeping this Dangerous Castle safe in England's

behalf, but I am troubled at the admission of this stranger; and young De Valence would have acted more strictly in the line of his duty, if he had refused to this wanderer any communication with this garrison without my permission."

"Pity it is," replied old Greenleaf, shaking his head, "that this good-natured and gallant young knight is somewhat drawn aside by the rash advices of his squire, the boy Fabian, who has bravery, but as little steadiness in him as a bottle of fermented small beer."

"Now hang thee," thought Fabian to himself, "for an old relic of the wars, stuffed full of conceit and warlike terms, like the soldier who, to keep himself from the cold, has lapped himself so close in a tattered ensign for a shelter, that his very outside may shew nothing but rags and blazonry."

"I would not think twice of the matter, were the party less dear to me," said Sir John de Walton. "But I would fain be of use to this young man, even although I should purchase his improvement in military knowledge at the expense of giving him a little pain. Experience should, as it were, be burnt in upon the mind of a young man, and not merely impressed by marking the lines of his chart out for him with chalk; I will remember the hint you, Greenleaf, have given, and take an opportunity of severing these two young men; and though I most dearly love the one, and am far from wishing ill to the other, yet at present, as you well hint, the blind is leading the blind, and the young knight has for his assistant and counsellor too young a squire, and that must be amended."

"Marry! out upon thee, old palmer-worm!" said the page within himself; "have I found thee in the very fact of maligning myself and my master, as it is thy nature to do towards all the hopeful young buds of chivalry? If it were not to dirty the arms of an *élève* of chivalry, by measuring them with one of thy rank, I might honour thee with a knightly invitation to the field, while the scandal which thou hast spoken is still foul upon thy tongue; as it is, thou shalt not carry one kind of language publicly in the castle, and another before the governor, upon the footing of having served with him under the banner of Longshanks. I will carry to my master this tale of thine evil intentions; and when we have concerted together, it shall appear whether the youthful spirits of the garrison or the grey beards are most likely to be the hope and protection of this same Castle of Douglas."

It is enough to say that Fabian pursued his purpose, in carrying to his master, and in no very good humour, the report of what had passed between Sir John de Walton and the old soldier. He succeeded in representing the whole as a formal offence intended to Sir Aymer de Valence; while all that the governor did to remove the suspicions entertained by the young knight, could not in any respect bring him to take a kindly view of the feelings of his commander towards him. He retained the impression which he had formed from Fabian's recital of what he had heard, and did not think he was doing Sir John de Walton any injustice, in supposing him desirous to engross the greatest share of the fame acquired in

the defence of the castle, and thrusting back his companions, who might reasonably pretend to a fair portion of it.

The mother of mischief, says a Scottish proverb, is no bigger than a midge's wing.* In this matter of quarrel, neither the young man nor the older knight had afforded each other any just cause of offence. De Walton was a strict observer of military discipline, in which he had been educated from his extreme youth, and by which he was almost as completely ruled as by his natural disposition; and his present situation added force to his original education.

Common report had even exaggerated the military skill, the love of adventure, and the great variety of enterprise, ascribed to James, the young Lord of Douglas. He had, in the eyes of this Southern garrison, the faculties of a fiend, rather than those of a mere mortal; for if the English soldiers cursed the tedium of the perpetual watch and ward upon the Dangerous Castle, which admitted of no relaxation from the severity of extreme duty, they agreed that a tall form was sure to appear to them with a battle-axe in his hand, and entering into conversation in the most insinuating manner, never failed, with an ingenuity and eloquence equal to that of a fallen spirit, to recommend to the discontented sentinel some mode in which, by giving his assistance to betray the English, he might set himself at liberty. The variety of these devices, and the frequency of their recurrence, kept Sir John de Walton's anxiety

* *i. e.* Gnat's wing.

so perpetually upon the stretch, that he at no time thought himself exactly out of the Black Douglas's reach, any more than the good Christian supposes himself out of reach of the wiles of the Devil; while every new temptation, instead of confirming his hope, seems to announce that the immediate retreat of the Evil One will be followed by some new attack yet more cunningly devised. Under this general state of anxiety and apprehension, the temper of the governor changed somewhat for the worse, and they who loved him best, regretted most that he became addicted to complain of the want of diligence on the part of those who, neither invested with responsibility like his, nor animated by the hope of such splendid rewards, did not entertain the same degree of watchful and incessant suspicion as himself. The soldiers muttered that the vigilance of their governor was marked with severity; the officers and men of rank, of whom there were several, as the castle was a renowned school of arms, and there was a certain merit attained even by serving within its walls, complained, at the same time, that Sir John de Walton no longer made parties for hunting, for hawking, or for any purpose which might soften the rigours of warfare, and suffered nothing to go forward but the precise discipline of the castle. On the other hand, it may be usually granted that the castle is well kept where the governor is a disciplinarian; and where feuds and personal quarrels are found in the garrison, the young men are usually more in fault than those whose greater experience has convinced them of the necessity of using the strictest precautions.

A generous mind—and such was Sir John de Walton's—is often in this way changed and corrupted by the habit of over-vigilance, and pushed beyond its natural limits of candour. Neither was Sir Aymer de Valence free from a similar change; suspicion, though from a different cause, seemed also to threaten to bias his open and noble disposition, in those qualities which had hitherto been proper to him. It was in vain that Sir John de Walton studiously sought opportunities to give his younger friend indulgences, which at times were as far extended as the duty of the garrison permitted. The blow was struck; the alarm had been given to a proud and fiery temper on both sides; and while De Valence entertained an opinion that he was unjustly suspected by a friend, who was in several respects bound to him, De Walton, on the other hand, was led to conceive that a young man, of whom he took a charge as affectionate as if he had been a son of his own, and who owed to his lessons what he knew of warfare, and what success he had obtained in life, had taken offence at trifles, and considered himself ill treated on very inadequate grounds. The seeds of disagreement, thus sown between them, failed not, like the tares sown by the Enemy among the wheat, to pass from one class of the garrison to another; the soldiers, though without any better reason than merely to pass the time, took different sides between their governor and his young lieutenant; and so the ball of contention being once thrown up between them, never lacked some arm or other to keep it in motion.

CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
  And life is thorny, and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love,
  Doth work like madness in the brain.
* * * * * *
Each spoke words of high disdain,
And insult to his heart's dear brother,
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
  Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between,
  But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

CHRISTABEL.—*Coleridge.*

In prosecution of the intention which, when his blood was cool, seemed to him wisest, Sir John de Walton resolved that he would go to the verge of indulgence with his lieutenant and his young officers, furnish them with every species of amusement which the place rendered possible, and make them ashamed of their discontent, by overloading them with courtesy. The first time, therefore, that he saw Aymer de Valence after his return to the castle, he addressed him in high spirits, whether real or assumed.

"What thinkest thou, my young friend," said De Walton, "if we try some of the woodland sports proper, they say, to this country? There are still in our neighbourhood some herds of the Caledonian breed of wild cattle, which are nowhere to be found except among the moorlands—the black and rugged frontier of what was anciently called the Kingdom of Strath-Clyde. There are some hunters, too, who have been accustomed to the sport, and who vouch that these animals are by far the most bold and fierce subjects of chase in the island of Britain."

"You will do as you please," replied Sir Aymer, coldly; "but it is not I, Sir John, who would recommend, for the sake of a hunting-match, that you should involve the whole garrison in danger; you know best the responsibilities incurred by your office here, and no doubt must have heedfully attended to them before making a proposal of such a nature."

"I do indeed know my own duty," replied De Walton, offended in turn, "and might be allowed to think of yours also, without assuming more than my own share of responsibility; but it seems to me as if the commander of this Dangerous Castle, among other inabilities, were, as old people in this country say, subjected to a spell—and one which renders it impossible for him to guide his conduct so as to afford pleasure to those whom he is most desirous to oblige. Not a great many weeks since, whose eyes would have sparkled like those of Sir Aymer de Valence at the proposal of a general hunting-match after a new object of game; and now what is his bearing when such sport is proposed, merely, I think,

to disappoint my purpose of obliging him?—a cold acquiescence drops half frozen from his lips, and he proposes to go to rouse the wild cattle with an air of gravity, as if he were undertaking a pilgrimage to the tomb of a martyr."

"Not so, Sir John," answered the young knight. "In our present situation we stand conjoined in more charges than one, and although the greater and controlling trust is no doubt laid upon you as the elder and abler knight, yet still I feel that I myself have my own share of a serious responsibility. I trust, therefore, you will indulgently hear my opinion, and bear with it, even though it should appear to have relation to that part of our common charge which is more especially intrusted to your keeping. The dignity of knighthood which I have the honour to share with you, the *accolade* laid on my shoulder by the royal Plantagenet, entitles me, methinks, to so much grace."

"I cry you mercy," said the elder cavalier; "I forgot how important a person I had before me, dubbed by King Edward himself, who was moved no doubt by special reasons to confer such an early honour; and I certainly feel that I overstep my duty when I propose anything that savours like idle sport to a person of such grave pretensions."

"Sir John de Walton," retorted De Valence, "we have had something too much of this—let it stop here. All that I mean to say is, that in this wardship of Douglas Castle, it will not be by my consent, if any amusement, which distinctly infers a relaxation of discipline, be unnecessarily engaged in, and

especially such as compels us to summon to our assistance a number of the Scots, whose evil disposition towards us we well know; nor will I, though my years have rendered me liable to such suspicion, suffer anything of this kind to be imputed to me; and if unfortunately—though I am sure I know not why—we are in future to lay aside those bonds of familiar friendship which formerly linked us to each other, yet I see no reason why we should not bear ourselves in our necessary communications like knights and gentlemen, and put the best construction on each other's motives, since there can be no reason for imputing the worst to anything that comes from either of us."

"You may be right, Sir Aymer de Valence," said the governor, bending stiffly: "and since you say we are no longer bound to each other as friends, you may be certain, nevertheless, that I will never permit a hostile feeling, of which you are the object, to occupy my bosom. You have been long, and I hope not uselessly, my pupil in the duties of chivalry. You are the near relation of the Earl of Pembroke, my kind and constant patron, and if these circumstances are well weighed, they form a connection, which it would be difficult, at least, for me to break through. If you feel yourself, as you seem to intimate, less strictly tied by former obligations, you must take your own choice in fixing our relations towards each other."

"I can only say," replied De Valence, "that my conduct will naturally be regulated by your own; and you, Sir John, cannot hope more devoutly than

I do, that our military duties may be fairly discharged, without interfering with our friendly intercourse."

The knights here parted, after a conference which once or twice had very nearly terminated in a full and cordial explanation; but still there was wanting one kind heartfelt word from either to break, as it were, the ice which was fast freezing upon their intercourse, and neither chose to be the first in making the necessary advance with sufficient cordiality, though each would have gladly done so, had the other appeared desirous of meeting it with the same ardour; but their pride was too high, and prevented either from saying what might at once have put them upon an open and manly footing. They parted, therefore, without again returning to the subject of the proposed diversion; until it was afterwards resumed in a formal note, praying Sir Aymer de Valence to accompany the commandant of Douglas Castle upon a solemn hunting-match, which had for its object the wild cattle of the neighbouring dale.

The time of meeting was appointed at six in the morning, beyond the gate of the outer barricade; and the chase was declared to be ended in the afternoon, when the *recheat* should be blown beneath the great oak, known by the name of Sholto's Club, which stood a remarkable object, where Douglas Dale was bounded by several scattered trees, the outskirts of the forest and hill country. The usual warning was sent out to the common people, or vassals of the district, which they, notwithstanding their feeling of antipathy, received in general with

delight, upon the great Epicurean principle of *carpe diem*, that is to say, in whatever circumstances it happens to present itself, be sure you lose no recreation which life affords. A hunting-match has still its attractions, even though an English knight take his pleasure in the woods of the Douglas.

It was no doubt afflicting to these faithful vassals, to acknowledge another lord than the redoubted Douglas, and to wait by wood and river at the command of English officers, and in the company of their archers, whom they accounted their natural enemies. Still it was the only species of amusement which had been permitted them for a long time, and they were not disposed to omit the rare opportunity of joining in it. The chase of the wolf, the wild boar, or even the timid stag, required sylvan arms; the wild cattle still more demanded this equipment of war-bows and shafts, boar-spears and sharp swords, and other tools of the chase similar to those used in actual war. Considering this, the Scottish inhabitants were seldom allowed to join in the chase, except under regulations as to number and arms, and especially in preserving a balance of force on the side of the English soldiers, which was very offensive to them. The greater part of the garrison was upon such occasions kept on foot, and several detachments, formed according to the governor's direction, were stationed in different positions, in case any quarrel should suddenly break out.

CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

The drivers through the wood went,
  For to raise the deer;
Bowmen bickered upon the bent,
  With their broad arrows clear.

The wylde through the woods went,
  On every side shear;
Greyhounds through the groves glent,
  For to kill their deer.

BALLAD OF CHEVY CHASE, *Old Edit.*

THE appointed morning came in cold and raw, after the manner of the Scottish March weather. Dogs yelped, yawned, and shivered, and the huntsmen, though hardy and cheerful in expectation of the day's sport, twitched their mauds, or Lowland plaids, close to their throats, and looked with some dismay at the mists which floated about the horizon, now threatening to sink down on the peaks and ridges of prominent mountains, and now to shift their position under the influence of some of the uncertain gales, which rose and fell alternately, as they swept along the valley.

Nevertheless, the appearance of the whole formed, as is usual in almost all departments of the chase, a gay and a jovial spectacle. A brief truce seemed to have taken place between the nations, and the Scottish people appeared for the time rather as exhibiting

the sports of their mountains in a friendly manner to the accomplished knights and bonny archers of Old England, than as performing a feudal service, neither easy nor dignified in itself, at the instigation of usurping neighbours. The figures of the cavaliers, now half seen, now exhibited fully, and at the height of strenuous exertion, according to the character of the dangerous and broken ground, particularly attracted the attention of the pedestrians, who, leading the dogs or beating the thickets, dislodged such objects of chase as they found in the dingles, and kept their eyes fixed upon their companions, rendered more remarkable from being mounted, and the speed at which they urged their horses; the disregard of all accidents being as perfect as Melton-Mowbray itself, or any other noted field of hunters of the present day, can exhibit.

The principles on which modern and ancient hunting were conducted are, however, as different as possible. A fox, or even a hare is, in our own day, considered as a sufficient apology for a day's exercise to forty or fifty dogs, and nearly as many men and horses; but the ancient chase, even though not terminating, as it often did, in battle, carried with it objects more important, and an interest immeasurably more stirring. If indeed one species of exercise can be pointed out as more universally exhilarating and engrossing than others, it is certainly that of the chase. The poor overlaboured drudge, who has served out his day of life, and wearied all his energies in the service of his fellow-mortals—he who has been for many years the slave of agriculture, or (still

worse) of manufactures—engaged in raising a single peck of corn from year to year, or in the monotonous labours of the desk—can hardly remain dead to the general happiness when the chase sweeps past him with hound and horn, and for a moment feels all the exultation of the proudest cavalier who partakes the amusement. Let any one who has witnessed the sight recall to his imagination the vigour and lively interest which he has seen inspired into a village, including the oldest and feeblest of its inhabitants. In the words of Wordsworth, it is, on such occasions,

> "Up, Timothy, up with your staff and away,
> Not a soul will remain in the village to-day ;
> The hare has just started from Hamilton's grounds,
> And Skiddaw is glad with the cry of the hounds."

But compare these inspiring sounds to the burst of a whole feudal population enjoying the sport, whose lives, instead of being spent in the monotonous toil of modern avocations, have been agitated by the hazards of war, and of the chase, its near resemblance, and you must necessarily suppose that the excitation is extended, like a fire which catches to dry heath. To use the common expression, borrowed from another amusement, all is fish that comes in the net on such occasions. An ancient hunting-match (the nature of the carnage excepted) was almost equal to a modern battle, when the strife took place on the surface of a varied and unequal country. A whole district poured forth its inhabitants, who formed a ring of great extent, called technically

a tinchel, and, advancing and narrowing their circle by degrees, drove before them the alarmed animals of every kind; all and each of which, as they burst from the thicket or the moorland, were objects of the bow, the javelin, or whatever missile weapons the hunters possessed; while others were run down and worried by large greyhounds, or more frequently brought to bay, when the more important persons present claimed for themselves the pleasure of putting them to death with their chivalrous hands, incurring individually such danger as is inferred from a mortal contest even with the timid buck, when he is brought to the death-struggle, and has no choice but yielding his life or putting himself upon the defensive, by the aid of his splendid antlers, and with all the courage of despair.

The quantity of game found in Douglas Dale on this occasion was very considerable, for, as already noticed, it was a long time since a hunting upon a great scale had been attempted under the Douglasses themselves, whose misfortunes had commenced several years before, with those of their country. The English garrison, too, had not sooner judged themselves strong or numerous enough to exercise these valued feudal privileges. In the meantime, the game increased considerably. The deer, the wild cattle, and the wild boars, lay near the foot of the mountains, and made frequent irruptions into the lower part of the valley, which in Douglas Dale bears no small resemblance to an oasis, surrounded by tangled woods, and broken moors, occasionally rocky, and shewing large tracts of that bleak domi-

nion to which wild creatures gladly escape when pressed by the neighbourhood of man.

As the hunters traversed the spots which separated the field from the wood, there was always a stimulating uncertainty what sort of game was to be found, and the marksman, with his bow ready bent, or his javelin poised, and his good and well-bitted horse thrown upon its haunches, ready for a sudden start, observed watchfully what should rush from the covert, so that, were it deer, boar, wolf, wild cattle, or any other species of game, he might be in readiness.

The wolf, which, on account of its ravages, was the most obnoxious of the beasts of prey, did not, however, supply the degree of diversion which his name promised; he usually fled far — in some instances many miles—before he took courage to turn to bay, and though formidable at such moments, destroying both dogs and men by his terrible bite, yet at other times was rather despised for his cowardice. The boar, on the other hand, was a much more irascible and courageous animal.

The wild cattle, the most formidable of all the tenants of the ancient Caledonian forest, were, however, to the English cavaliers, by far the most interesting objects of pursuit.* Altogether, the ringing

* These Bulls are thus described by Hector Boetius, concerning whom he says—"In this wood (namely, the Caledonian wood) were sometime white bulls, with crisp and curling manes, like fierce lions; and though they seemed meek and tame in the remanent figure of their bodies, they were more wild than any other beasts, and had such hatred against the society and

of bugles, the clattering of horses' hoofs, the lowing and bellowing of the enraged mountain cattle, the sobs of deer mangled by throttling dogs, the wild shouts of exultation of the men,—made a chorus which extended far through the scene in which it arose, and seemed to threaten the inhabitants of the valley even in its inmost recesses.

company of men, that they never came in the woods nor lesuries where they found any foot or hand thereof, and many days after they eat not of the herbs that were touched or handled by man. These bulls were so wild, that they were never taken but by slight and crafty labour, and so impatient, that after they were taken they died from insupportable dolour. As soon as any man invaded these bulls, they rushed with such terrible press upon him that they struck him to the earth, taking no fear of hounds, sharp lances, or other most penetrative weapons."—*Boetius, Chron. Scot.* Vol. I. page xxxix.

The wild cattle of this breed, which are now only known in one manor in England, that of Chillingham Castle in Northumberland, (the seat of the Earl of Tankerville,) were, in the memory of man, still preserved in three places in Scotland, namely, Drumlanrig, Cumbernauld, and the upper park at Hamilton Palace, at all of which places, except the last, I believe, they have now been destroyed, on account of their ferocity. But though those of modern days are remarkable for their white colour, with black muzzles, and exhibiting, in a small degree, the black mane, about three or four inches long, by which the bulls in particular are distinguished, they do not by any means come near the terrific description given us by the ancient authors, which has made some naturalists think that these animals should probably be referred to a different species, though possessing the same general habits, and included in the same genus. The bones which are often discovered in Scottish mosses belong certainly to a race of animals much larger than those of Chillingham, which seldom grow to above 80 stone (of 14 lbs.,), the general weight varying from 60 to 80 stone. We

During the course of the hunting, when a stag or a boar was expected, one of the wild cattle often came rushing forward bearing down the young trees, crashing the branches in its progress, and in general dispersing whatever opposition was presented to it by the hunters. Sir John de Walton was the only one of the chivalry of the party who individually

should be accounted very negligent by one class of readers, did we not record that the beef furnished by those cattle is of excellent flavour, and finely marbled.

[The following is an extract from a letter received by Sir Walter Scott, some time after the publication of the novel :—

"When it is wished to kill any of the cattle at Chillingham, the keeper goes into the herd on horseback, in which way they are quite accessible, and singling out his victim, takes aim with a large rifle-gun, and seldom fails in bringing him down. If the poor animal makes much bellowing in his agony, and especially if the ground be stained with his blood, his companions become very furious, and are themselves, I believe, accessory to his death. After which, they fly off to a distant part of the park, and he is drawn away on a sledge. Lord Tankerville is very tenacious of these singular animals ; he will on no account part with a living one, and hardly allows of a sufficient number being killed, to leave pasturage for those that remain.

"It happened on one occasion, three or four years ago, that a party visiting at the castle, among whom were some *men of war*, who had hunted buffaloes in foreign parts, obtained permission to do the keeper's work and shoot one of the wild cattle. They sallied out on horseback, and duly equipped for the enterprise, attacked their object. The poor animal received several wounds, but none of them proving fatal, he retired before his pursuers, roaring with pain and rage, till, planting himself against a wall or tree, he stood at bay, offering a front of defiance. In this position the youthful heir of the castle, Lord Ossulston, rode up to give him the fatal shot. Though warned of the danger of approaching near to the enraged animal, and

succeeded in mastering one of these powerful animals. Like a Spanish tauridor, he bore down and killed with his lance a ferocious bull; two well-grown calves and three kine were also slain, being unable to carry off the quantity of arrows, javelins, and other missiles, directed against them by the archers and drivers; but many others, in spite of every endeavour to intercept them, escaped to their gloomy haunts in the remote skirts of the mountain called Cairntable, with their hides well feathered with those marks of human enmity.

A large portion of the morning was spent in this way, until a particular blast from the master of the hunt announced that he had not forgot the discreet custom of the repast, which, on such occasions, was provided for upon a scale proportioned to the multitude who had been convened to attend the sport.

The blast peculiar to the time, assembled the whole party in an open space in a wood, where their numbers had room and accommodation to sit down upon the green turf, the slain game affording a plentiful supply for roasting or broiling, an employment in which the lower class were all immediately

especially of firing without first having turned his horse's head in a direction to be ready for flight, he discharged his piece; but ere he could turn his horse round to make his retreat, the raging beast had plunged his immense horns into its flank. The horse staggered and was near falling, but recovering by a violent effort, he extricated himself from his infuriated pursuer, making off with all the speed his wasting strength supplied, his entrails meanwhile dragging on the ground; till at length he fell, and died at the same moment. The animal was now close

engaged; while puncheons and pipes, placed in readiness, and scientifically opened, supplied Gascoigne wine, and mighty ale, at the pleasure of those who chose to appeal to them.

The knights, whose rank did not admit of interference, were seated by themselves, and ministered to by their squires and pages, to whom such menial services were not accounted disgraceful, but, on the contrary, a proper step of their education. The number of those distinguished persons seated upon the present occasion at the table of dais, as it was called, (in virtue of a canopy of green boughs with which it was overshadowed,) comprehended Sir John de Walton, Sir Aymer de Valence, and some reverend brethren dedicated to the service of Saint Bride, who, though Scottish ecclesiastics, were treated with becoming respect by the English soldiers. One or two Scottish retainers, or vavasours, maintaining, perhaps in prudence, a suitable deference to the English knights, sat at the bottom of the table, and as many English archers, peculiarly respected by their superiors, were invited, according to the modern phrase, to the honours of the sitting.

upon his rear, and the young Lord would unquestionably have shared the fate of his unhappy steed, had not the keeper, deeming it full time to conclude the *day's diversion*, fired at the instant. His shot brought the beast to the ground, and running in with his large knife, he put a period to his existence.

"This scene of gentlemanly pastime was viewed from a turret of the castle by Lady Tankerville and her female visitors. Such a situation for the mother of the young hero, was anything but enviable."]

Sir John de Walton sat at the head of the table; his eye, though it seemed to have no certain object, yet never for a moment remained stationary, but glanced from one countenance to another of the ring formed by his guests, for such they all were, no doubt, though he himself could hardly have told upon what principle he had issued the invitations; and even apparently was a loss to think what, in one or two cases, had procured him the honour of their presence.

One person in particular caught De Walton's eye, as having the air of a redoubted man-at-arms, although it seemed as if fortune had not of late smiled upon his enterprises. He was a tall raw-boned man, of an extremely rugged countenance, and his skin, which shewed itself through many a loophole in his dress, exhibited a complexion which must have endured all the varieties of an outlawed life; and akin to one who had, according to the customary phrase, "ta'en the bent with Robin Bruce," in other words, occupied the moors with him as an insurgent. Some such idea certainly crossed De Walton's mind. Yet the apparent coolness, and absence of alarm, with which the stranger sat at the board of an English officer, at the same time being wholly in his power, had much in it which was irreconcilable with any such suggestion. De Walton, and several of those about him, had in the course of the day observed that this tattered cavalier, the most remarkable parts of whose garb and equipments consisted of an old coat-of-mail and a rusted yet massive partisan about eight feet long, was possessed of superior skill in the art of

hunting to any individual of their numerous party. The governor having looked at this suspicious figure until he had rendered the stranger aware of the special interest which he attracted, at length filled a goblet of choice wine, and requested him, as one of the best pupils of Sir Tristrem who had attended upon the day's chase, to pledge him in a vintage superior to that supplied to the general company.

"I suppose, however, sir," said De Walton, "you will have no objections to put off my challenge of a brimmer, until you can answer my pledge in Gascoigne wine, which grew in the king's own demesne, was pressed for his own lip, and is therefore fittest to be emptied to his majesty's health and prosperity."

"One half of the island of Britain," said the woodsman, with great composure, "will be of your honour's opinion; but as I belong to the other half, even the choicest liquor in Gascony cannot render that health acceptable to me."

A murmur of disapprobation ran through the warriors present; the priests hung their heads, looked deadly grave, and muttered their paternosters.

"You see, stranger," said De Walton sternly, "that your speech discomposes the company."

"It may be so," replied the man, in the same blunt tone; "and it may happen that there is no harm in the speech notwithstanding."

"Do you consider that it is made in my presence?" answered De Walton.

"Yes, Sir Governor."

"And have you thought what must be the necessary inference?" continued De Walton.

"I may form a round guess," answered the stranger, "what I might have to fear, if your safe conduct and word of honour, when inviting me to this hunting, were less trustworthy than I know full well it really is. But I am your guest—your meat is even now passing my throat—your cup, filled with right good wine, I have just now quaffed off—and I would not fear the rankest Paynim infidel, if we stood in such relation together, much less an English knight. I tell you, besides, Sir Knight, you undervalue the wine we have quaffed. The high flavour and contents of your cup, grow where it will, give me spirit to tell you one or two circumstances, which cold cautious sobriety would, in a moment like this, have left unsaid. You wish, I doubt not, to know who I am? My Christian name is Michael—my surname is that of Turnbull, a redoubted clan, to whose honours, even in the field of hunting or of battle, I have added something. My abode is beneath the mountain of Rubieslaw, by the fair streams of Teviot. You are surprised that I know how to hunt the wild cattle,—I, who have made them my sport from infancy in the lonely forests of Jed and Southdean, and have killed more of them than you or any Englishman in your host ever saw, even if you include the doughty deeds of this day."

The bold borderer made this declaration with the same provoking degree of coolness which predominated in his whole demeanour, and was indeed his principal attribute. His effrontery did not fail to produce its effect upon Sir John de Walton, who instantly called out, "To arms! to arms!—Secure

the spy and traitor! Ho! pages and yeomen—William, Anthony, Bend-the-Bow, and Greenleaf—seize the traitor, and bind him with your bow-strings and dog-leashes—bind him, I say, until the blood start from beneath his nails!"

"Here is a goodly summons!" said Turnbull, with a sort of horselaugh. "Were I as sure of being answered by twenty men I could name, there would be small doubt of the upshot of this day."

The archers thickened around the hunter, yet laid no hold on him, none of them being willing to be the first who broke the peace proper to the occasion.

"Tell me," said De Walton, "thou traitor, for what waitest thou here?"

"Simply and solely," said the Jed forester, "that I may deliver up to the Douglas the castle of his ancestors, and that I may ensure thee, Sir Englishman, the payment of thy deserts, by cutting that very throat which thou makest such a bawling use of."

At the same time, perceiving that the yeomen were crowding behind him to carry their lord's commands into execution so soon as they should be reiterated, the huntsman turned himself short round upon those who appeared about to surprise him, and having, by the suddenness of the action, induced them to stand back apace, he proceeded—"Yes, John de Walton, my purpose was ere now to have put thee to death, as one whom I find in possession of that castle and territory which belong to my master, a knight much more worthy than thyself; but I know not why I have paused—thou hast given me food when I have

hungered for twenty-four hours, I have not therefore had the heart to pay thee at advantage as thou hast deserved. Begone from this place and country, and take the fair warning of a foe; thou hast constituted thyself the mortal enemy of this people, and there are those among them who have seldom been injured or defied with impunity. Take no care in searching after me, it will be in vain,—until I meet thee at a time which will come at my pleasure, not thine. Push not your inquisition into cruelty, to discover by what means I have deceived you, for it is impossible for you to learn; and with this friendly advice, look at me and take your leave, for although we shall one day meet, it may be long ere I see you again."

De Walton remained silent, hoping that his prisoner, (for he saw no chance of his escaping) might, in his communicative humour, drop some more information, and was not desirous to precipitate a fray with which the scene was likely to conclude, unconscious at the same time of the advantage which he thereby gave the daring hunter.

As Turnbull concluded his sentence, he made a sudden spring backwards, which carried him out of the circle formed around him, and before they were aware of his intentions, at once disappeared among the underwood.

"Seize him—seize him!" repeated De Walton; "let us have him at least at our discretion, unless the earth has actually swallowed him."

This indeed appeared not unlikely, for near the place where Turnbull had made the spring, there yawned a steep ravine, into which he plunged, and

descended by the assistance of branches, bushes, and copsewood, until he reached the bottom, where he found some road to the outskirts of the forest, through which he made his escape, leaving the most expert woodsmen among the pursuers totally at fault, and unable to trace his footsteps.

RHYMER'S TOWER: NEAR MELROSE.

SKIRTS OF CAIRNTABLE: DOUGLAS-DALE.

CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

THIS interlude carried some confusion into the proceedings of the hunt, thus suddenly surprised by the apparition of Michael Turnbull, an armed and avowed follower of the House of Douglas, a sight so little to be expected in the territory where his master was held a rebel and a bandit, and where he himself must have been well known to most of the peasantry present. The circumstance made an obvious impression on the English chivalry. Sir John de Walton looked grave and thoughtful, ordered the hunters to be assembled on the spot, and directed his soldiers to commence a strict search among the persons who had attended the chase, so as to discover whether Turnbull had any companions among them; but it was

too late to make that inquiry in the strict fashion which De Walton directed.

The Scottish attendants on the chase, when they beheld that the hunting, under pretence of which they were called together, was interrupted for the purpose of laying hands upon their persons, and subjecting them to examination, took care to suit their answers to the questions put to them; in a word, they kept their own secret, if they had any. Many of them, conscious of being the weaker party, became afraid of foul play, slipt away from the places to which they had been appointed, and left the hunting-match like men who conceived they had been invited with no friendly intent. Sir John de Walton became aware of the decreasing numbers of the Scottish—their gradual disappearance awakening in the English knight that degree of suspicion which had of late become his peculiar characteristic.

"Take, I pray thee," said he to Sir Aymer de Valence, "as many men-at-arms as thou canst get together in five minutes' space, and at least a hundred of the mounted archers, and ride as fast as thou canst, without permitting them to straggle from thy standard, to reinforce the garrison of Douglas; for I have my own thoughts what may have been attempted on the castle, when we observe with our own eyes such a nest of traitors here assembled."

"With reverence, Sir John," replied Aymer, "you shoot in this matter rather beyond the mark. That the Scottish peasants have had bad thoughts against us, I will be the last to deny; but, long debarred from any sylvan sport, you cannot wonder at their

crowding to any diversion by wood or river, and still less at their being easily alarmed as to the certainty of the safe footing on which they stand with us. The least rough usage is likely to strike them with fear, and with the desire of escape, and so——"

"And so," said Sir John de Walton, who had listened with a degree of impatience scarce consistent with the grave and formal politeness which one knight was accustomed to bestow upon another, "and so I would rather see Sir Aymer de Valence busy his horse's heels to execute my orders, than give his tongue the trouble of impugning them."

At this sharp reprimand, all present looked at each other with indications of marked displeasure. Sir Aymer was highly offended, but saw it was no time to indulge in reprisal. He bowed until the feather which was in his barret-cap mingled with his horse's mane, and without reply—for he did not even choose to trust his voice in reply at the moment—headed a considerable body of cavalry by the straightest road back to the Castle of Douglas.

When he came to one of those eminences from which he could observe the massive and complicated towers and walls of the old fortress, with the glitter of the broad lake which surrounded it on three sides, he felt much pleasure at the sight of the great banner of England, which streamed from the highest part of the building. "I knew it," he internally said; "I was certain that Sir John de Walton had become a very woman in the indulgence of his fears and suspicions. Alas! that a situation of responsibility should so much have altered a disposition

which I have known so noble and so knightly! By this good day, I scarce know in what manner I should demean me when thus publicly rebuked before the garrison. Certainly he deserves that I should, at some time or other, let him understand, that however he may triumph in the exercise of his short-lived command, yet, when man is to meet with man, it will puzzle Sir John de Walton to shew himself the superior of Aymer de Valence, or perhaps to establish himself as his equal. But if, on the contrary, his fears, however fantastic, are sincere at the moment he expresses them, it becomes me to obey punctually commands which, however absurd, are imposed in consequence of the governor's belief that they are rendered necessary by the times, and not inventions designed to vex and domineer over his officers in the indulgence of his official powers. I would I knew which is the true statement of the case, and whether the once famed De Walton is become afraid of his enemies more than fits a knight, or makes imaginary doubts the pretext of tyrannizing over his friend. I cannot say it would make much difference to me, but I would rather have it that the man I once loved had turned a petty tyrant than a weak-spirited coward; and I would be content that he should study to vex me, rather than be afraid of his own shadow."

With these ideas passing in his mind, the young knight crossed the causeway which traversed the piece of water that fed the moat, and, passing under the strongly fortified gateway, gave strict orders for letting down the portcullis, and elevating the draw-

bridge, even at the appearance of De Walton's own standard before it.

A slow and guarded movement from the hunting ground to the Castle of Douglas, gave the governor ample time to recover his temper, and to forget that his young friend had shewn less alacrity than usual in obeying his commands. He was even disposed to treat as a jest the length of time and extreme degree of ceremony with which every point of martial discipline was observed on his own re-admission to the castle, though the raw air of a wet spring evening whistled around his own unsheltered person, and those of his followers, as they waited before the castle gate for the exchange of pass-words, the delivery of keys, and all the slow minutiæ attendant upon the movements of a garrison in a well-guarded fortress.

"Come," said he, to an old knight, who was peevishly blaming the lieutenant-governor, "it was my own fault; I spoke but now to Aymer de Valence with more authoritative emphasis than his newly dubbed dignity was pleased with, and this precise style of obedience is a piece of not unnatural and very pardonable revenge. Well, we will owe him a return, Sir Philip—shall we not? This is not a night to keep a man at the gate."

This dialogue, overheard by some of the squires and pages, was bandied about from one to another, until it entirely lost the tone of good humour in which it was spoken, and the offence was one for which Sir John de Walton and old Sir Philip were to meditate revenge, and was said to have been represented by the governor as a piece of mortal and in-

tentional offence on the part of his subordinate officer.

Thus an increasing feud went on from day to day between two warriors, who, with no just cause of quarrel, had at heart every reason to esteem and love each other. It became visible in the fortress even to those of the lower rank, who hoped to gain some consequence by intermingling in the species of emulation produced by the jealousy of the commanding officers—an emulation which may take place, indeed, in the present day, but can hardly have the same sense of wounded pride and jealous dignity attached to it, which existed in times when the personal honour of knighthood rendered those who possessed it jealous of every punctilio.

So many little debates took place between the two knights, that Sir Aymer de Valence thought himself under the necessity of writing to his uncle and namesake, the Earl of Pembroke, stating that his officer, Sir John de Walton, had unfortunately of late taken some degree of prejudice against him, and that after having borne with many provoking instances of his displeasure, he was now compelled to request that his place of service should be changed from the Castle of Douglas, to wherever honour could be acquired, and time might be given to put an end to his present cause of complaint against his commanding officer. Through the whole letter, young Sir Aymer was particularly cautious how he expressed his sense of Sir John de Walton's jealousy or severe usage; but such sentiments are not easily concealed, and in spite of him an air of displeasure glanced out from several

passages, and indicated his discontent with his uncle's old friend and companion in arms, and with the sphere of military duty which his uncle had himself assigned him.

An accidental movement among the English troops brought Sir Aymer an answer to his letter sooner than he could have hoped for at that time of day, in the ordinary course of correspondence, which was then extremely slow and interrupted.

Pembroke, a rigid old warrior, entertained the most partial opinion of Sir John de Walton, who was a work as it were of his own hands, and was indignant to find that his nephew, whom he considered as a mere boy, elated by having had the dignity of knighthood conferred upon him at an age unusually early, did not absolutely coincide with him in this opinion. He replied to him, accordingly, in a tone of high displeasure, and expressed himself as a person of rank would write to a young and dependent kinsman upon the duties of his profession; and, as he gathered his nephew's cause of complaint from his own letter, he conceived that he did him no injustice in making it slighter than it really was. He reminded the young man that the study of chivalry consisted in the faithful and patient discharge of military service, whether of high or low degree, according to the circumstances in which war placed the champion. That above all, the post of danger, which Douglas Castle had been termed by common consent, was also the post of honour; and that a young man should be cautious how he incurred the supposition of being desirous of quitting his present honourable command, because

he was tired of the discipline of a military director so renowned as Sir John de Walton. Much also there was, as was natural in a letter of that time, concerning the duty of young men, whether in council or in arms, to be guided implicitly by their elders; and it was observed, with justice, that the commanding officer, who had put himself into the situation of being responsible with his honour, if not his life, for the event of the siege or blockade, might justly, and in a degree more than common, claim the implicit direction of the whole defence. Lastly, Pembroke reminded his nephew that he was, in a great measure, dependent upon the report of Sir John de Walton for the character which he was to sustain in after life; and reminded him, that a few actions of headlong and inconsiderate valour would not so firmly found his military reputation, as months and years spent in regular, humble, and steady obedience to the commands which the governor of Douglas Castle might think necessary in so dangerous a conjuncture.

This missive arrived within so short a time after the despatch of the letter to which it was a reply, that Sir Aymer was almost tempted to suppose that his uncle had some mode of corresponding with De Walton, unknown to the young knight himself, and to the rest of the garrison. And as the earl alluded to some particular displeasure which had been exhibited by De Valence on a late trivial occasion, his uncle's knowledge of this, and other minutiæ, seemed to confirm his idea that his own conduct was watched in a manner which he did not feel honourable to himself, or dignified on the part of his relative; in

SIR WALTER SCOTT COURSING NEAR ABBOTSFORD.

a word, he conceived himself exposed to that sort of surveillance of which, in all ages, the young have accused the old. It hardly needs to say that the admonition of the Earl of Pembroke greatly chafed the fiery spirit of his nephew; insomuch, that if the earl had wished to write a letter purposely to increase the prejudices which he desired to put an end to, he could not have made use of terms better calculated for that effect.

The truth was, that the old archer, Gilbert Greenleaf, had, without the knowledge of the young knight, gone to Pembroke's camp, in Ayrshire, and was recommended by Sir John de Walton to the earl, as a person who could give such minute information respecting Aymer de Valence, as he might desire to receive. The old archer was, as we have seen, a formalist, and when pressed on some points of Sir Aymer de Valence's discipline, he did not hesitate to throw out hints, which, connected with those in the knight's letter to his uncle, made the severe old earl adopt too implicitly the idea that his nephew was indulging a spirit of insubordination, and a sense of impatience under authority, most dangerous to the character of a young soldier. A little explanation might have produced a complete agreement in the sentiments of both; but for this, fate allowed neither time nor opportunity; and the old earl was unfortunately induced to become a party, instead of a negotiator, in the quarrel,

"And by decision more embroil'd the fray."

Sir John de Walton soon perceived, that the re-

ceipt of Pembroke's letter did not in any respect alter the cold ceremonious conduct of his lieutenant towards him, which limited their intercourse to what their situation rendered indispensable, and exhibited no advances to any more frank or intimate connection. Thus, as may sometimes be the case between officers in their relative situations even at the present day, they remained in that cold stiff degree of official communication, in which their intercourse was limited to as few expressions as the respective duties of their situation absolutely demanded. Such a state of misunderstanding is, in fact, worse than a downright quarrel;—the latter may be explained or apologized for, or become the subject of mediation; but in such a case as the former, an *éclaircissement* is as unlikely to take place as a general engagement between two armies which have taken up strong defensive positions on both sides. Duty, however, obliged the two principal persons in the garrison of Douglas Castle to be often together, when they were so far from seeking an opportunity of making up matters, that they usually revived ancient subjects of debate.

It was upon such an occasion that De Walton, in a very formal manner, asked De Valence in what capacity, and for how long time, it was his pleasure that the minstrel, called Bertram, should remain at the castle.

"A week," said the governor, "is certainly long enough, in this time and place, to express the hospitality due to a minstrel."

"Certainly," replied the young man, "I have not

interest enough in the subject to form a single wish upon it."

"In that case," resumed De Walton, "I shall request of this person to cut short his visit at the Castle of Douglas."

"I know no particular interest," replied Aymer de Valence, "which I can possibly have in this man's motions. He is here under pretence of making some researches after the writings of Thomas of Erceldoun, called the Rhymer, which he says are infinitely curious, and of which there is a volume in the old Baron's study, saved somehow from the flames at the last conflagration. This told, you know as much of his errand as I do; and if you hold the presence of a wandering old man, and the neighbourhood of a boy, dangerous to the castle under your charge, you will no doubt do well to dismiss them—it will cost but a word of your mouth."

"Pardon me," said De Walton; "the minstrel came here as one of your retinue, and I could not, in fitting courtesy, send him away without your leave."

"I am sorry, then," answered Sir Aymer, "in my turn, that you did not mention your purpose sooner. I never entertained a dependent, vassal, or servant, whose residence in the castle I would wish to have prolonged a moment beyond your honourable pleasure."

"I am sorry," said Sir John de Walton, "that we two have of late grown so extremely courteous that it is difficult for us to understand each other This minstrel and his son come from we know not where, and are bound we know not whither. There

is a report among some of your escort, that this fellow Bertram upon the way had the audacity to impugn, even to your face, the King of England's right to the crown of Scotland, and that he debated the point with you, while your other attendants were desired by you to keep behind and out of hearing."

"Hah!" said Sir Aymer, "do you mean to found on that circumstance any charge against my loyalty? I pray you to observe, that such an averment would touch mine honour, which I am ready and willing to defend to the last gasp."

"No doubt of it, Sir Knight," answered the governor; "but it is the strolling minstrel, and not the high-born English knight, against whom the charge is brought. Well! the minstrel comes to this castle, and he intimates a wish that his son should be allowed to take up his quarters at the little old convent of Saint Bride, where two or three Scottish nuns and friars are still permitted to reside, most of them rather out of respect to their order, than for any good-will which they are supposed to bear the English or their sovereign. It may also be noticed, that this leave was purchased by a larger sum of money, if my information be correct, than is usually to be found in the purses of travelling minstrels, a class of wanderers alike remarkable for their poverty and for their genius. What do you think of all this?"

"I?" — replied De Valence; "I am happy that my situation, as a soldier, under command, altogether dispenses with my thinking of it at all. My post, as lieutenant of your castle, is such, that if I

can manage matters so as to call my honour and my soul my own, I must think that quite enough of free-will is left at my command; and I promise you shall not have again to reprove, or send a bad report of me to my uncle, on that account."

"This is beyond sufferance!" said Sir John de Walton half aside, and then proceeded aloud—"Do not, for Heaven's sake, do yourself and me the injustice of supposing that I am endeavouring to gain an advantage over you by these questions. Recollect, young knight, that when you evade giving your commanding officer your advice when required, you fail as much in point of duty, as if you declined affording him the assistance of your sword and lance."

"Such being the case," answered De Valence, "let me know plainly on what matter it is that you require my opinion? I will deliver it plainly, and stand by the result, even if I should have the misfortune (a crime unpardonable in so young a man, and so inferior an officer) to differ from that of Sir John de Walton."

"I would ask you then, Sir Knight of Valence," answered the governor, "what is your opinion with respect to this minstrel, Bertram, and whether the suspicions respecting him and his son are not such as to call upon me, in performance of my duty, to put them to a close examination, with the question ordinary and extraordinary, as is usual in such cases, and to expel them not only from the castle, but from the whole territory of Douglas Dale, under pain of scourging, if they be again found wandering in these parts?"

"You ask me my opinion," said De Valence, "and you shall have it, Sir Knight of Walton, as freely and fairly, as if matters stood betwixt us on a footing as friendly as they ever did. I agree with you, that most of those who in these days profess the science of minstrelsy, are altogether unqualified to support the higher pretensions of that noble order. Minstrels by right, are men who have dedicated themselves to the noble occupation of celebrating knightly deeds and generous principles; it is in their verse that the valiant knight is handed down to fame, and the poet has a right, nay, is bound, to emulate the virtues which he praises. The looseness of the times has diminished the consequence, and impaired the morality of this class of wanderers; their satire and their praise are now too often distributed on no other principle than love of gain; yet let us hope that there are still among them some who know, and also willingly perform, their duty. My own opinion is that this Bertram holds himself as one who has not shared in the degradation of his brethren, nor bent the knee to the mammon of the times; it must remain with you, sir, to judge whether such a person, honourably and morally disposed, can cause any danger to the Castle of Douglas. But believing, from the sentiments he has manifested to me, that he is incapable of playing the part of a traitor, I must strongly remonstrate against his being punished as one, or subjected to the torture within the walls of an English garrison. I should blush for my country, if it required of us to inflict such wanton misery upon wanderers, whose sole fault is poverty; and your own knightly senti-

ments will suggest more than would become me to state to Sir John de Walton, unless in so far as is necessary to apologize for retaining my own opinion."

Sir John de Walton's dark brow was stricken with red when he heard an opinion delivered in opposition to his own, which plainly went to stigmatize his advice as ungenerous, unfeeling, and unknightly. He made an effort to preserve his temper, while he thus replied with a degree of calmness. "You have given your opinion, Sir Aymer de Valence; and that you have given it openly and boldly, without regard to my own, I thank you. It is not quite so clear that I am obliged to defer my own sentiments to yours, in case the rules on which I hold my office—the commands of the king—and the observations which I may personally have made, shall recommend to me a different line of conduct from that which you think it right to suggest."

De Walton bowed, in conclusion, with great gravity; and the young knight, returning the reverence with exactly the same degree of stiff formality, asked whether there were any particular orders respecting his duty in the castle; and having received an answer in the negative, took his departure.

Sir John de Walton, after an expression of impatience, as if disappointed at finding that the advance which he had made towards an explanation with his young friend had proved unexpectedly abortive, composed his brow as if to deep thought, and walked several times to and fro in the apartment, considering what course he was to take in these circumstan-

ces. "It is hard to censure him severely," he said, "when I recollect that, on first entering upon life, my own thoughts and feelings would have been the same with those of this giddy and hot-headed, but generous boy. Now prudence teaches me to suspect mankind in a thousand instances where perhaps there is not sufficient ground. If I am disposed to venture my own honour and fortune, rather than an idle travelling minstrel should suffer a little pain, which at all events I might make up to him by money, still, have I a right to run the risk of a conspiracy against the king, and thus advance the treasonable surrender of the Castle of Douglas, for which I know so many schemes are formed; for which, too, none can be imagined so desperate but agents will be found bold enough to undertake the execution? A man who holds my situation, although the slave of conscience, ought to learn to set aside those false scruples which assume the appearance of flowing from our own moral feeling, whereas they are in fact instilled by the suggestion of affected delicacy. I will not, I swear by Heaven, be infected by the follies of a boy, such as Aymer; I will not, that I may defer to his caprices, lose all that love, honour, and ambition can propose, for the reward of twelve months' service, of a nature the most watchful and unpleasant. I will go straight to my point, and use the ordinary precautions in Scotland which I should employ in Normandy or Gascoigny. — What ho! page! who waits there?"

One of his attendants replied to his summons—"Seek me out Gilbert Greenleaf the archer, and tell

him I would speak with him touching the two bows and the sheaf of arrows, concerning which I gave him a commission to Ayr."

A few minutes intervened after the order was given, when the archer entered, holding in his hand two bow-staves, not yet fashioned, and a number of arrows secured together with a thong. He bore the mysterious looks of one whose apparent business is not of very great consequence, but is meant as a passport for other affairs which are in themselves of a secret nature. Accordingly, as the knight was silent, and afforded no other opening for Greenleaf, that judicious negotiator proceeded to enter upon such as was open to him.

"Here are the bow-staves, noble sir, which you desired me to obtain while I was at Ayr with the Earl of Pembroke's army. They are not so good as I could have wished, yet are perhaps of better quality than could have been procured by any other than a fair judge of the weapon. The Earl of Pembroke's whole camp are frantic mad in order to procure real Spanish staves from the Groyne, and other ports in Spain; but though two vessels laden with such came into the port of Ayr, said to be for the King's army, yet I believe never one half of them have come into English hands. These two grew in Sherwood, which having been seasoned since the time of Robin Hood, are not likely to fail either in strength or in aim, in so strong a hand, and with so just an eye, as those of the men who wait on your worship."

"And who has got the rest, since two ships' cargoes of new bow-staves are arrived at Ayr, and

thou with difficulty hast only procured me two old ones?" said the governor.

"Faith, I pretend not skill enough to know," answered Greenleaf, shrugging his shoulders. "Talk there is of plots in that country as well as here. It is said that their Bruce, and the rest of his kinsmen, intend a new May-game, and that the outlawed king proposes to land near to Turnberry, early in summer, with a number of stout kernes from Ireland; and no doubt the men of his mock earldom of Carrick are getting them ready with bow and spear for so hopeful an undertaking. I reckon that it will not cost us the expense of more than a few score of sheaves of arrows to put all that matter to rights."

"Do you talk then of conspiracies in this part of the country, Greenleaf?" said De Walton. "I know you are a sagacious fellow, well bred for many a day to the use of the bent stick and string, and will not allow such a practice to go on under thy nose, without taking notice of it."

"I am old enough, Heaven knows," said Greenleaf, "and have had good experience of these Scottish wars, and know well whether these native Scots are a people to be trusted to by knight or yeoman. Say they are a false generation, and say a good archer told you so, who, with a fair aim, seldom missed a handsbreadth of the white. Ah! sir, your honour knows how to deal with them—ride them strongly, and rein them hard,—you are not like those simple novices who imagine that all is to be done by gentleness, and wish to parade themselves as courteous and generous to those faithless moun-

taineers, who never, in the course of their lives, knew any tincture either of courteousness or generosity."

"Thou alludest to some one," said the governor, "and I charge thee, Gilbert, to be plain and sincere with me. Thou knowest, methinks, that in trusting me thou wilt come to no harm?"

"It is true, it is true, sir," said the old remnant of the wars, carrying his hand to his brow, "but it were imprudent to communicate all the remarks which float through an old man's brain in the idle moments of such a garrison as this. One stumbles unawares on fantasies, as well as realities, and thus one gets, not altogether undeservedly, the character of a talebearer and mischief-maker among his comrades, and methinks I would not willingly fall under that accusation."

"Speak frankly to me," answered De Walton, "and have no fear of being misconstrued, whosoever the conversation may concern."

"Nay, in plain truth," answered Gilbert, "I fear not the greatness of this young knight, being, as I am, the oldest soldier in the garrison, and having drawn a bowstring long and many a day ere he was weaned from his nurse's breast."

"It is then," said De Walton, "my lieutenant and friend, Aymer de Valence, at whom your suspicions point?"

"At nothing," replied the archer, "touching the honour of the young knight himself, who is as brave as the sword he wears, and, his youth considered, stands high in the roll of English chivalry; but he is young, as your worship knows, and I own that in

the choice of his company he disturbs and alarms me."

"Why, you know, Greenleaf," answered the governor, "that in the leisure of a garrison a knight cannot always confine his sports and pleasures among those of his own rank, who are not numerous, and may not be so gamesome or fond of frolic, as he would desire them to be."

"I know that well," answered the archer, "nor would I say a word concerning your honour's lieutenant for joining any honest fellows, however inferior their rank, in the wrestling ring, or at a bout of quarter-staff. But if Sir Aymer de Valence has a fondness for martial tales of former days, methinks he had better learn them from the ancient soldiers who have followed Edward the First, whom God assoilzie, and who have known before his time the Barons' wars and other onslaughts, in which the knights and archers of merry England transmitted so many gallant actions to be recorded by fame; this truly, I say, were more beseeming the Earl of Pembroke's nephew, than to see him closet himself day after day with a strolling minstrel, who gains his livelihood by reciting nonsense and lies to such young men as are fond enough to believe him, of whom hardly any one knows whether he be English or Scottish in his opinions, and still less can any one pretend to say whether he is of English or Scottish birth, or with what purpose he lies lounging about this castle, and is left free to communicate everything which passes within it to those old mutterers of matins at Saint Bride's, who say with their tongues

God save King Edward, but pray in their hearts God save King Robert the Bruce. Such a communication he can easily carry on by means of his son, who lies at Saint Bride's cell, as your worship knows, under pretence of illness."

"How do you say?" exclaimed the governor, "under pretence?—is he not then really indisposed?"

"Nay, he may be sick to the death for aught I know," said the archer; "but if so, were it not then more natural that the father should attend his son's sick-bed, than that he should be ranging about this castle, where one eternally meets him in the old Baron's study, or in some corner, where you least expect to find him."

"If he has no lawful object," replied the knight, "it might be as you say; but he is said to be in quest of ancient poems or prophecies of Merlin, of the Rhymer, or some other old bard; and in truth it is natural for him to wish to enlarge his stock of knowledge and power of giving amusement, and where should he find the means save in a study filled with ancient books?"

"No doubt," replied the archer, with a sort of dry civil sneer of incredulity; "I have seldom known an insurrection in Scotland but that it was prophesied by some old forgotten rhyme, conjured out of dust and cobwebs, for the sake of giving courage to those North Country rebels, who durst not otherwise have abidden the whistling of the grey-goose shaft; but curled heads are hasty, and, with license, even your own train, Sir Knight, retains too much of the fire of youth for such uncertain times as the present."

"Thou hast convinced me, Gilbert Greenleaf, and I will look into this man's business and occupation more closely than hitherto. This is no time to peril the safety of a royal castle for the sake of affecting generosity towards a man of whom we know so little, and to whom, till we receive a very full explanation, we may, without doing him injustice, attach grave suspicions. Is he now in the apartment called the Baron's study?"

"Your worship will be certain to find him there," replied Greenleaf.

"Then follow me, with two or three of thy comrades, and keep out of sight, but within hearing; it may be necessary to arrest this man."

"My assistance," said the old archer, "shall be at hand when you call, but——"

"But what?" said the knight; "I hope I am not to find doubts and disobedience on all hands?"

"Certainly not on mine," replied Greenleaf; "I would only remind your worship that what I have said was a sincere opinion expressed in answer to your worship's question; and that, as Sir Aymer de Valence has avowed himself the patron of this man, I would not willingly be left to the hazard of his revenge."

"Pshaw!" answered De Walton, "is Aymer de Valence governor of this castle, or am I? or to whom do you imagine you are responsible for answering such questions as I may put to you?"

"Nay," replied the archer, secretly not displeased at seeing De Walton shew some little jealousy of his own authority, "believe me, Sir Knight, that I know

my own station and your worship's, and that I am not now to be told to whom I owe obedience."

"To the study, then, and let us find the man," said the governor.

"A fine matter, indeed," subjoined Greenleaf, following him, "that your worship should have to go in person to look after the arrest of so mean an individual. But your honour is right; these minstrels are often jugglers, and possess the power of making their escape by means which borrel * folk like myself are disposed to attribute to necromancy."

Without attending to these last words, Sir John de Walton set forth towards the study, walking at a quick pace, as if this conversation had augmented his desire to find himself in possession of the person of the suspected minstrel.

Traversing the ancient passages of the castle, the governor had no difficulty in reaching the study, which was strongly vaulted with stone, and furnished with a sort of iron cabinet, intended for the preservation of articles and papers of value, in case of fire. Here he found the minstrel seated at a small table, sustaining before him a manuscript apparently of great antiquity, from which he seemed engaged in making extracts. The windows of the room were very small, and still shewed some traces that they had originally been glazed with a painted history of Saint Bride—another mark of the devotion of the great family of Douglas to their tutelar saint.

The minstrel, who had seemed deeply wrapped in the contemplation of his task, on being disturbed by

* Unlearned.

the unlooked-for entrance of Sir John de Walton, rose with every mark of respect and humility, and, remaining standing in the governor's presence, appeared to wait for his interrogations, as if he had anticipated that the visit concerned himself particularly.

"I am to suppose, Sir Minstrel," said Sir John de Walton, "that you have been successful in your search, and have found the roll of poetry or prophecies that you proposed to seek after amongst these broken shelves and tattered volumes?"

"More successful than I could have expected," replied the minstrel, "considering the effects of the conflagration. This, Sir Knight, is apparently the fatal volume for which I sought, and strange it is, considering the heavy chance of other books contained in this library, that I have been able to find a few though imperfect fragments of it."

"Since, therefore, you have been permitted to indulge your curiosity," said the governor, "I trust, minstrel, you will have no objection to satisfy mine?"

The minstrel replied with the same humility, "that if there was anything within the poor compass of his skill which could gratify Sir John de Walton in any degree, he would but reach his lute, and presently obey his commands."

"You mistake, sir," said Sir John, somewhat harshly. "I am none of those who have hours to spend in listening to tales or music of former days; my life has hardly given me time enough for learning the duties of my profession, far less has it al-

lowed me leisure for such twangling follies. I care not who knows it, but my ear is so incapable of judging of your art, which you doubtless think a noble one, that I can scarcely tell the modulation of one tune from another."

"In that case," replied the minstrel composedly, "I can hardly promise myself the pleasure of affording your worship the amusement which I might otherwise have done."

"Nor do I look for any at your hand," said the governor, advancing a step nearer to him, and speaking in a sterner tone. "I want information, sir, which I am assured you can give me, if you incline; and it is my duty to tell you, that if you show unwillingness to speak the truth, I know means by which it will become my painful duty to extort it in a more disagreeable manner than I would wish."

"If your questions, Sir Knight," answered Bertram, "be such as I can or ought to answer, there shall be no occasion to put them more than once. If they are such as I cannot or ought not to reply to, believe me that no threats of violence will extort an answer from me."

"You speak boldly," said Sir John de Walton; "but take my word for it, that your courage will be put to the test. I am as little fond of proceeding to such extremities as you can be of undergoing them, but such will be the natural consequence of your own obstinacy. I therefore ask you whether Bertram be your real name—whether you have any other profession than that of a travelling minstrel — and, lastly, whether you have any acquaintance or con-

nection with any Englishman or Scottishman beyond the walls of this Castle of Douglas?"

"To these questions," replied the minstrel, "I have already answered the worshipful knight, Sir Aymer de Valence, and, having fully satisfied him, it is not, I conceive, necessary that I should undergo a second examination; nor is it consistent either with your worship's honour, or that of the lieutenant-governor, that such a re-examination should take place."

"You are very considerate," replied the governor, "of my honour and of that of Sir Aymer de Valence. Take my word for it, they are both in perfect safety in our own keeping, and may dispense with your attention. I ask you, will you answer the enquiries which it is my duty to make, or am I to enforce obedience by putting you under the penalties of the question? I have already, it is my duty to say, seen the answers you have returned to my lieutenant, and they do not satisfy me."

He at the same time clapped his hands, and two or three archers shewed themselves stripped of their tunics, and only attired in their shirts and hose.

"I understand," said the minstrel, "that you intend to inflict upon me a punishment which is foreign to the genius of the English laws, in that no proof is adduced of my guilt. I have already told that I am by birth an Englishman, by profession a minstrel, and that I am totally unconnected with any person likely to nourish any design against this Castle of Douglas, Sir John de Walton, or his garrison. What answers you may extort from me by bodily agony, I cannot, to speak as a plain-dealing Christian, hold

myself responsible for. I think that I can endure as much pain as any one; I am sure that I never yet felt a degree of agony, that I would not willingly prefer to breaking my plighted word, or becoming a false informer against innocent persons, but I own I do not know the extent to which the art of torture may be carried; and though I do not fear you, Sir John de Walton, yet I must acknowledge that I fear myself, since I know not to what extremity your cruelty may be capable of subjecting me, or how far I may be enabled to bear it. I, therefore, in the first place, protest, that I shall in no manner be liable for any words which I may utter in the course of any examination enforced from me by torture; and you must therefore, under such circumstances, proceed to the execution of an office, which, permit me to say, is hardly that which I expected to have found thus administered by an accomplished knight like yourself."

"Hark you, sir," replied the governor, "you and I are at issue, and in doing my duty, I ought instantly to proceed to the extremities I have threatened; but perhaps you yourself feel less reluctance to undergo the examination as proposed, than I shall do in commanding it; I will therefore consign you for the present to a place of confinement, suitable to one who is suspected of being a spy upon this fortress. Until you are pleased to remove such suspicions, your lodgings and nourishment are those of a prisoner. In the meantime, before subjecting you to the question, take notice, I will myself ride to the Abbey of Saint Bride, and satisfy myself whether the young person

whom you would pass as your son, is possessed of the same determination as that which you yourself seem to assert. It may so happen that his examination and yours may throw such light upon each other as will decidedly prove either your guilt or innocence, without its being confirmed by the use of the extraordinary question. If it be otherwise, tremble for your son's sake, if not for your own.—Have I shaken you, sir?—or do you fear, for your boy's young sinews and joints, the engines which, in your own case, you seem willing to defy?"

"Sir," answered the minstrel, recovering from the momentary emotion he had shewn, "I leave it to yourself, as a man of honour and candour, whether you ought, in common fairness, to form a worse opinion of any man, because he is not unwilling to incur, in his own person, severities which he would not desire to be inflicted upon his child, a sickly youth, just recovering from a dangerous disease."

"It is my duty," answered De Walton, after a short pause, "to leave no stone unturned by which this business may be traced to the source; and if thou desirest mercy for thy son, thou wilt thyself most easily attain it, by setting him the example of honesty and plain-dealing."

The minstrel threw himself back on the seat, as if fully resolved to bear every extremity that could be inflicted, rather than make any farther answer than he had already offered. Sir John de Walton himself seemed in some degree uncertain what might now be his best course. He felt an invincible repugnance to proceed, without due consideration, in what most

people would have deemed the direct line of his duty, by inflicting the torture both upon father and son; but deep as was his sense of devotion towards the King, and numerous as were the hopes and expectations he had formed upon the strict discharge of his present high trust, he could not resolve upon having recourse at once to this cruel method of cutting the knot. Bertram's appearance was venerable, and his power of words not unworthy of his aspect and bearing. The governor remembered that Aymer de Valence, whose judgment in general it was impossible to deny, had described him as one of those rare individuals, who vindicated the honour of a corrupted profession by their personal good behaviour; and he acknowledged to himself, that there was gross cruelty and injustice in refusing to admit the prisoner to the credit of being a true and honest man, until, by way of proving his rectitude, he had strained every sinew, and crushed every joint in his body, as well as those of his son. "I have no touchstone," he said internally, "which can distinguish truth from falsehood; the Bruce and his followers are on the alert, —he has certainly equipped the galleys which lay at Rachrin during winter. This story, too, of Greenleaf, about arms been procured for a new insurrection, tallies strangely with the appearance of that savage-looking forester at the hunt; and all tends to shew, that something is upon the anvil which it is my duty to provide against. I will, therefore, pass over no circumstance by which I can affect the mind through hope or fear; but, please God to give me light from any other source, I will not think it law-

ful to torment these unfortunate, and it may yet be, honest men." He accordingly took his departure from the library, whispering a word to Greenleaf respecting the prisoner.

He had reached the outward door of the study, and his satellites had already taken the minstrel into their grasp, when the voice of the old man was heard calling upon De Walton to return for a single moment.

"What hast thou to say, sir?" said the governor; "be speedy, for I have already lost more time in listening to thee than I am answerable for, and so I advise thee for thine own sake——"

"I advise thee," said the minstrel, "for thine own sake, Sir John de Walton, to beware how thou dost insist on thy present purpose, by which thou thyself alone, of all men living, will most severely suffer. If thou harmest a hair of that young man's head—nay, if thou permittest him to undergo any privation which it is in thy power to prevent, thou wilt, in doing so, prepare for thine own suffering a degree of agony more acute than any thing else in this mortal world could cause thee. I swear by the most blessed objects of our holy religion; I call to witness that holy sepulchre, of which I have been an unworthy visitor, that I speak nothing but the truth, and that thou wilt one day testify thy gratitude for the part I am now acting. It is my interest, as well as yours, to secure you in the safe possession of this castle, although assuredly I know some things respecting it, and respecting your worship, which I am not at liberty to tell without the consent of that youth.

Bring me but a note under his hand, consenting to my taking you into our mystery, and believe me, you will soon see those clouds charmed away; since there was never a doleful uncertainty which more speedily changed to joy, or a thunder-cloud of adversity which more instantly gave way to sunshine, than would then the suspicions which appear now so formidable."

He spoke with so much earnestness as to make some impression upon Sir John de Walton, who was once more wholly at a loss to know what line his duty called upon him to pursue.

"I would most gladly," said the governor, "follow out my purpose by the gentlest means in my power; and I shall bring no further distress upon this poor lad, than thine own obstinacy and his shall appear to deserve. In the meantime, think, Sir Minstrel, that my duty has limits, and if I slack it for a day, it will become thee to exert every effort in thy power to meet my condescension. I will give thee leave to address thy son by a line under thy hand, and I will await his answer before I proceed farther in this matter, which seems to be very mysterious. Meantime, as thou hast a soul to be saved, I conjure thee to speak the truth, and tell me whether the secrets of which thou seemest to be a too faithful treasurer, have regard to the practices of Douglas, of Bruce, or of any of their names, against this Castle of Douglas?"

The prisoner thought a moment, and then replied—"I am aware, Sir Knight, of the severe charge under which this command is intrusted to your hands, and

were it in my power to assist you, as a faithful minstrel and loyal subject, either with hand or tongue, I should feel myself called upon so to do; but so far am I from being the character your suspicions have apprehended, that I should have held it for certain that the Bruce and Douglas had assembled their followers, for the purpose of renouncing their rebellious attempts, and taking their departure for the Holy Land, but for the apparition of the forester, who, I hear, bearded you at the hunting, which impresses upon me the belief, that when so resolute a follower and henchman of the Douglas was sitting fearless among you, his master and comrades could be at no great distance—how far his intentions could be friendly to you, I must leave it to yourself to judge; only believe me thus far, that the rack, pulley, or pincers, would not have compelled me to act the informer, or adviser, in a quarrel wherein I have little or no share, if I had not been desirous of fixing the belief upon you, that you are dealing with a true man, and one who has your welfare at heart.—Meanwhile, permit me to have writing materials, or let my own be restored, for I possess, in some degree, the higher arts of my calling; nor do I fear but that I can procure for you an explanation of these marvels, without much more loss of time."

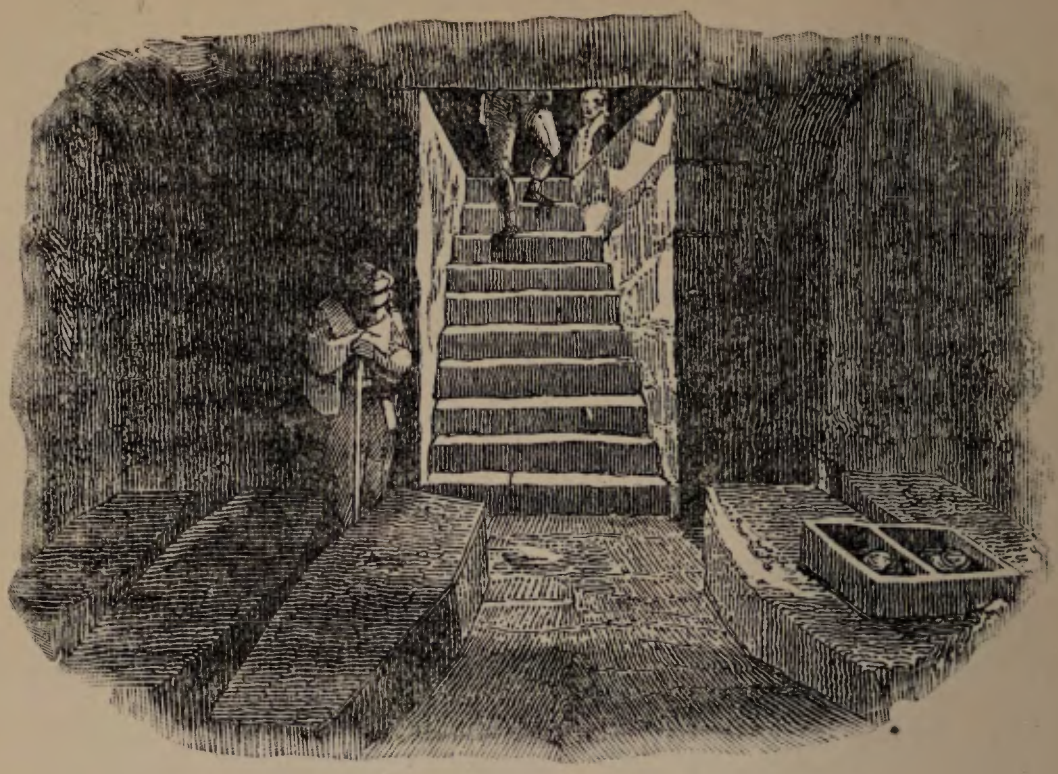
"God grant it prove so," said the governor; "though I see not well how I can hope for so favourable a termination, and I may sustain great harm by trusting too much on the present occasion. My duty, however, requires that, in the meantime, you be removed into strict confinement."

He handed to the prisoner, as he spoke, the writing materials, which had been seized upon by the archers on their first entrance, and then commanded those satellites to unhand the minstrel.

"I must, then," said Bertram, "remain subjected to all the severities of a strict captivity; but I deprecate no hardship whatever in my own person, so I may secure you from acting with a degree of rashness, of which you will all your life repent, without the means of atoning."

"No more words, minstrel," said the governor; "but since I have made my choice, perhaps a very dangerous one for myself, let us carry this spell into execution, which thou sayest is to serve me, as mariners say that oil spread upon the raging billows will assuage their fury."

ANCIENT BELL, OR CLAP.



VAULT OF SAINT BRIDE'S KIRK : DOUGLAS.

CHAPTER THE NINTH.

* * * * * *

Beware! beware! of the black Friar,
  He still retains his sway,
For he is yet the Church's heir by right,
  Whoever may be the lay.
Amundeville is lord by day,
  But the monk is lord by night,
Nor wine nor wassel could raise a vassal
  To question that friar's right.

DON JUAN, *Canto xvii.*

THE minstrel made no vain boast of the skill which he possessed in the use of pen and ink. In fact, no priest of the time could have produced his little scroll more speedily, more neatly composed, or

more fairly written, than were the lines addressed "To the youth called Augustine, son of Bertram the Minstrel."

"I have not folded this letter," said he, "nor tied it with silk, for it is not expressed so as to explain the mystery to you; nor, to speak frankly, do I think that it can convey to you any intelligence; but it may be satisfactory to shew you what the letter does not contain, and that it is written from and to a person who both mean kindly towards you and your garrison."

"That," said the governor, "is a deception which is easily practised; it tends, however, to shew, though not with certainty, that you are disposed to act upon good faith; and until the contrary appear, I shall consider it a point of duty to treat you with as much gentleness as the matter admits of. Meantime, I will myself ride to the Abbey of Saint Bride, and in person examine the young prisoner; and as you say he has the power, so I pray to Heaven he may have the will, to read this riddle, which seems to throw us all into confusion." So saying, he ordered his horse, and while it was getting ready, he perused with great composure the minstrel's letter. Its contents ran thus:—

"DEAR AUGUSTINE,

"Sir John de Walton, the governor of this castle, has conceived those suspicions which I pointed out as likely to be the consequence of our coming to this country without an avowed errand. I at least am seized, and threatened with examination under tor-

ture, to force me to tell the purpose of our journey; but they shall tear my flesh from my bones, ere they force me to break the oath which I have taken. And the purport of this letter is to apprize you of the danger in which you stand of being placed in similar circumstances, unless you are disposed to authorise me to make the discovery to this knight; but on this subject you have only to express your own wishes, being assured they shall be in every respect attended to by your devoted "BERTRAM."

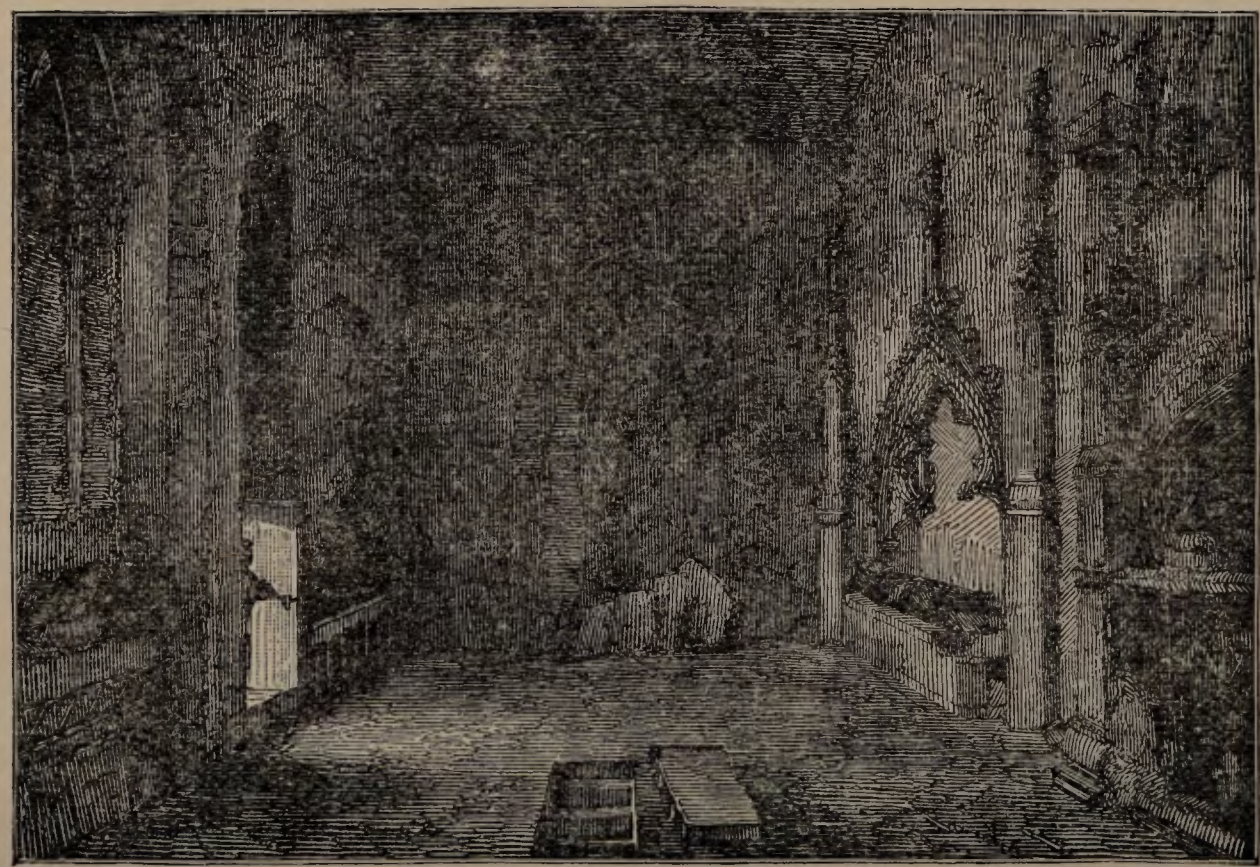
This letter did not throw the smallest light upon the mystery of the writer. The governor read it more than once, and turned it repeatedly in his hand, as if he had hoped by that mechanical process to draw something from the missive, which at a first view the words did not express; but as no result of this sort appeared, De Walton retired to the hall, where he informed Sir Aymer de Valence, that he was going abroad as far as the Abbey of Saint Bride, and that he would be obliged by his taking upon him the duties of governor during his absence. Sir Aymer, of course, intimated his acquiescence in the charge; and the state of disunion in which they stood to each other, permitted no further explanation.

Upon the arrival of Sir John de Walton at the dilapidated shrine, the abbot, with trembling haste, made it his business immediately to attend the commander of the English garrison, upon whom for the present, their house depended for every indulgence they experienced, as well as for the subsistence and

protection necessary to them in so perilous a period. Having interrogated this old man respecting the youth residing in the abbey, De Walton was informed that he had been indisposed since left there by his father, Bertram, a minstrel. It appeared to the abbot, that his indisposition might be of that contagious kind which, at that period, ravaged the English Borders, and made some incursions into Scotland, where it afterwards worked a fearful progress. After some farther conversation, Sir John de Walton put into the abbot's hand the letter to the young person under his roof, on delivering which to Augustine, the reverend father was charged with a message to the English governor, so bold, that he was afraid to be the bearer of it. It signified, that the youth could not, and would not, at that moment, receive the English knight; but that, if he came back on the morrow after mass, it was probable he might learn something of what was requested.

"This is not an answer," said Sir John de Walton, "to be sent by a boy like this to a person in my charge; and methinks, Father Abbot, you consult your own safety but slenderly in delivering such an insolent message."

The abbot trembled under the folds of his large coarse habit; and De Walton, imagining that his discomposure was the consequence of guilty fear, called upon him to remember the duties which he owed to England, the benefits which he had received from himself, and the probable consequence of taking part in a pert boy's insolent defiance of the power of the governor of the province.



INTERIOR OF THE KIRK OF SAINT BRIDE: DOUGLAS, LANARKSHIRE.

The abbot vindicated himself from these charges with the utmost anxiety. He pledged his sacred word, that the inconsiderate character of the boy's message was owing to the waywardness arising from indisposition. He reminded the governor that, as a Christian and an Englishman, he had duties to observe towards the community of Saint Bride, which had never given the English government the least subject of complaint. As he spoke, the churchman seemed to gather courage from the immunities of his order. He said he could not permit a sick boy who had taken refuge within the sanctuary of the Church, to be seized or subjected to any species of force, unless he was accused of a specific crime, capable of being immediately proved. The Douglasses, a headstrong race, had, in former days, uniformly respected the sanctuary of Saint Bride, and it was not to be supposed that the King of England, the dutiful and obedient child of the Church of Rome, would act with less veneration for her rights, than the followers of a usurper, homicide, and excommunicated person like Robert Bruce.

Walton was considerably shaken with this remonstrance. He knew that, in the circumstances of the times, the Pope had great power in every controversy in which it was his pleasure to interfere. He knew that even in the dispute respecting the supremacy of Scotland, his Holiness had set up a claim to the kingdom which, in the temper of the times, might perhaps have been deemed superior both to that of Robert Bruce and that of Edward of England, and he conceived his monarch would give

him little thanks for any fresh embroilment which might take place with the Church. Moreover, it was easy to place a watch, so as to prevent Augustine from escaping during the night; and on the following morning he would be still as effectually in the power of the English governor as if he were seized on by open force at the present moment. Sir John de Walton, however, so far exerted his authority over the abbot, that he engaged, in consideration of the sanctuary being respected for this space of time, that, when it expired, he would be aiding and assisting with his spiritual authority to surrender the youth, should he not allege a sufficient reason to the contrary. This arrangement, which appeared still to flatter the governor with the prospect of an easy termination of this troublesome dispute, induced him to grant the delay which Augustine rather demanded than petitioned for.

"At your request, Father Abbot, whom I have hitherto found a true man, I will indulge this youth with the grace he asks, before taking him into custody, understanding that he shall not be permitted to leave this place; and thou art to be responsible to this effect, giving thee, as is reasonable, power to command our little garrison at Hazelside, to which I will send a reinforcement on my return to the Castle, in case it should be necessary to use the strong hand, or circumstances imposed upon me other measures."

"Worthy Sir Knight," replied the abbot, "I have no idea that the frowardness of this youth will render any course necessary, saving that of persua-

sion; and I venture to say, that you yourself will in the highest degree approve of the method in which I shall acquit myself of my present trust."

The abbot went through the duties of hospitality, enumerating what simple cheer the cloister of the convent permitted him to offer to the English knight. Sir John De Walton declined the offer of refreshment, however—took a courteous leave of the churchman, and did not spare his horse until the noble animal had brought him again before the Castle of Douglas. Sir Aymer de Valence met him on the drawbridge, and reported the state of the garrison to be the same in which he had left it, excepting that intimation had been received that twelve or fifteen men were expected on their way to the town of Lanark; and being on march from the neighbourhood of Ayr, would that night take up their quarters at the outpost of Hazelside.

"I am glad of it," replied the governor; "I was about to strengthen that detachment. This stripling, the son of Bertram the minstrel, or whoever he is, has engaged to deliver himself up for examination in the morning. As this party of soldiers are followers of your uncle, Lord Pembroke, may I request you will ride to meet them, and command them to remain at Hazelside until you make farther enquiries about this youth, who has still to clear up the mystery which hangs about him, and reply to a letter which I delivered with my own hand to the Abbot of Saint Bride. I have shewn too much forbearance in this matter, and I trust to your looking to the security of this young man, and conveying him hither, with all

due care and attention, as being a prisoner of some importance."

"Certainly, Sir John," answered Sir Aymer; "your orders shall be obeyed, since you have none of greater importance for one who hath the honour to be second only to yourself in this place."

"I crave your mercy, Sir Aymer," returned the governor, "if the commission be in any degree beneath your dignity; but it is our misfortune to misunderstand each other, when we endeavour to be most intelligible."

"But what am I to do," said Sir Aymer—"no way disputing your command, but only asking for information—what am I to do, if the Abbot of Saint Bride offers opposition?"

"How!" answered Sir John de Walton; "with the reinforcement from my Lord of Pembroke, you will command at least twenty war-men, with bow and spear, against five or six timid old monks, with only gown and hood."

"True," said Sir Aymer, "but ban and excommunication are sometimes, in the present day, too hard for the mail coat, and I would not willingly be thrown out of the pale of the Christian Church."

"Well then, thou very suspicious and scrupulous young man," replied De Walton, "know that if this youth does not deliver himself up to thee of his own accord, the abbot has promised to put him into thy hands."

There was no farther answer to be made, and De Valence, though still thinking himself unnecessarily harassed with the charge of a petty commission,

took the sort of half arms which were always used when the knights stirred beyond the walls of the garrison, and proceeded to execute the commands of De Walton. A horseman or two, together with his squire Fabian, accompanied him.

The evening closed in with one of those Scottish mists which are commonly said to be equal to the showers of happier climates; the path became more and more dark, the hills more wreathed in vapours, and more difficult to traverse; and all the little petty inconveniences which rendered travelling through the district slow and uncertain, were augmented by the density of the fog, which overhung everything.

Sir Aymer, therefore, occasionally mended his pace, and often incurred the fate of one who is over-late, delaying himself by his efforts to make greater expedition. The knight bethought himself that he would get into a straight road by passing through the almost deserted town of Douglas,—the inhabitants of which had been treated so severely by the English, in the course of those fierce troubles, that most of them who were capable of bearing arms had left it, and withdrawn themselves to different parts of the country. This almost deserted place was defended by a rude palisade, and a ruder drawbridge, which gave entrance into streets so narrow, as to admit with difficulty three horses abreast, and evincing with what strictness the ancient lords of the village adhered to their prejudice against fortifications, and their opinion in favour of keeping the field, so quaintly expressed in the well-known proverb of the family,—"It is better to hear the lark

sing than the mouse cheep." The streets, or rather the lanes, were dark, but for a shifting gleam of moonlight, which, as that planet began to rise, was now and then visible upon some steep and narrow gable. No sound of domestic industry, or domestic festivity, was heard, and no ray of candle or firelight glanced from the windows of the houses; the ancient ordinance called the curfew, which the Conqueror had introduced into England, was at this time in full force in such parts of Scotland as were thought doubtful, and likely to rebel; under which description it need not be said the ancient possessions of the Douglas were most especially regarded. The Church, whose Gothic monuments were of a magnificent character, had been, as far as possible, destroyed by fire; but the ruins, held together by the weight of the massive stones of which they were composed, still sufficiently evinced the greatness of the family at whose cost it had been raised, and whose bones, from immemorial time, had been entombed in its crypts.

Paying little attention to these relics of departed splendour, Sir Aymer de Valence advanced with his small detachment, and had passed the scattered fragments of the cemetery of the Douglasses, when to his surprise, the noise of his horse's feet was seemingly replied to by sounds which rung like those of another knightly steed advancing heavily up the street, as if it were to meet him. Valence was unable to conjecture what might be the cause of these warlike sounds; the ring and the clang of armour was distinct, and the heavy tramp of a war-horse was not to be mistaken by the ear of a warrior. The

difficulty of keeping soldiers from straying out of quarters by night would have sufficiently accounted for the appearance of a straggling foot-soldier; but it was more difficult to account for a mounted horseman, in full armour; and such was the apparition which a peculiarly bright glimpse of moonlight now shewed at the bottom of the causewayed hill. Perhaps the unknown warrior obtained at the same time a glance of Aymer de Valence and his armed followers—at least each of them shouted, "Who goes there?"—the alarm of the times; and on the instant the deep answers of "Saint George!" on the one side, and, "The Douglas!" on the other, awakened the still echoes of the small and ruinous street, and the silent arches of the dilapidated church. Astonished at a war-cry with which so many recollections were connected, the English knight spurred his horse at full gallop down the steep and broken descent leading out at the south or south-east gate of the town; and it was the work of an instant to call out, "Ho! Saint George! upon the insolent villain all of you!—To the gate, Fabian, and cut him off from flight!—Saint George! I say, for England! Bows and bills!—bows and bills!" At the same time Aymer de Valence laid in rest his own long lance, which he snatched from the squire by whom it was carried. But the light was seen and gone in an instant, and though De Valence concluded that the hostile warrior had hardly room to avoid his career, yet he could take no aim for the encounter, unless by mere guess, and continued to plunge down the dark declivity, among shattered stones and other encum-

brances, without groping out with his lance the object of his pursuit. He rode, in short, at a broken gallop, a descent of about fifty or sixty yards, without having any reason to suppose that he had met the figure which had appeared to him, although the narrowness of the street scarcely admitted his having passed him, unless both horse and horseman could have melted at the moment of encounter like an air-bubble. The riders of his suite, meanwhile, were struck with a feeling like supernatural terror, which a number of singular adventures had caused most of them to attach to the name of Douglas; and when he reached the gate by which the broken street was terminated, there was none close behind him but Fabian, in whose head no suggestions of a timorous nature could outlive the sound of his dear master's voice.

Here there were a post of English archers, who were turning out in considerable alarm, when De Valence and his page rode in amongst them. "Villains!" shouted De Valence, "why were you not upon your duty? Who was it passed through your post even now, with the traitorous cry of Douglas?"

"We know of no such," said the captain of the watch.

"That is to say, you besotted villains," answered the young knight, "you have been drinking, and have slept?"

The men protested the contrary, but in a confused manner, which was far from overcoming De Valence's suspicions. He called loudly to bring cressets, torches, and candles; and a few remaining inhabitants began to make their unwilling appearance, with such

various means of giving light as they chanced to possess. They heard the story of the young English knight with wonder; nor, although it was confirmed by all his retinue, did they give credit to the recital, more than that the Englishmen wished, somehow or other, to pick a quarrel with the people of the place, under the pretence of their having admitted a retainer of their ancient lord by night into the town. They protested, therefore, their innocence of the cause of tumult, and endeavoured to seem active in hastening from house to house, and corner to corner, with their torches, in order to discover the invisible cavalier. The English suspected them no less of treachery, than the Scottish imagined the whole matter a pretext for bringing an accusation, on the part of the young knight, against the citizens. The women, however, who now began to issue from the houses, had a key for the solution of the apparition, which at that time was believed of efficacy sufficient to solve any mystery. "The devil," they said, "must have appeared visibly amongst them," an explanation which had already occurred to the followers of the young knight; for that a living man and horse, both as it seemed, of a gigantic size, could be conjured in the twinkling of an eye, and appear in a street secured at one end by the best of the archers, and at the other by the horsemen under Valence himself, was altogether, it seemed, a thing impossible. The inhabitants did not venture to put their thoughts on the subject into language, for fear of giving offence, and only indicated by a passing word to each other the secret degree of pleasure which they felt in the con-

fusion and embarrassment of the English garrison. Still, however, they continued to affect a great deal of interest in the alarm which De Valence had received, and the anxiety which he expressed to discover the cause.

At length a female voice spoke above the Babel of confused sounds, saying, "Where is the Southern Knight? I am sure that I can tell him where he can find the only person who can help him out of his present difficulty."

"And who is that, good woman?" said Aymer de Valence, who was growing every moment more impatient at the loss of time, which was flying fast, in an investigation which had something vexatious in it, and even ridiculous. At the same time, the sight of an armed partisan of the Douglasses, in their own native town, seemed to bode too serious consequences, if it should be suffered to pass without being probed to the bottom.

"Come hither to me," said the female voice, "and I will name to you the only person who can explain all matters of this kind that chance in this country." On this the knight snatched a torch from some of those who were present, and holding it up, descried the person who spoke, a tall woman, who evidently endeavoured to render herself remarkable. When he approached her, she communicated her intelligence in a grave and sententious tone of voice.

"We had once wise men, that could have answered any parables which might have been put to them for explanation in this country side. Whether you yourselves, gentlemen, have not had some hand

in weeding them out, good troth, it is not for the like of me to say; at any rate, good counsel is not so easy come by as it was in this Douglas country, nor, may be, is it a safe thing to pretend to the power of giving it."

"Good woman," said De Valence, "if you will give me an explanation of this mystery I will owe you a kirtle of the best raploch grey."

"It is not I," said the old woman, "that pretend to possess the knowledge which may assist you; but I would fain know that the man whom I shall name to you shall be skaithless and harmless. Upon your knighthood and your honour, will you promise to me so much?"

"Assuredly," said De Valence, "such a person shall even have thanks and reward, if he is a faithful informer; ay, and pardon, moreover, although he may have listened to any dangerous practices, or been concerned in any plots."

"Oh! not he," replied the female; "it is old Goodman Powheid, who has the charge of the muniments," (meaning probably monuments,) "that is, such part of them as you English have left standing; I mean the old sexton of the kirk of Douglas, who can tell more stories of these old folk, whom your honour is not very fond of hearing named, than would last us from this day to Yule."

"Does any body," said the knight, "know whom it is that this old woman means?"

"I conjecture," replied Fabian, "that she speaks of an old dotard, who is, I think, the general referee concerning the history and antiquities of this old

town, and of the savage family that lived here perhaps before the flood."

"And who, I dare say," said the knight, "knows as much about the matter as she herself does. But where is this man? a sexton is he? He may be acquainted with places of concealment, which are often fabricated in Gothic buildings, and known to those whose business calls them to frequent them. Come, my good old dame, bring this man to me; or, what may be better, I will go to him, for we have already spent too much time."

"Time!" replied the old woman,—"is time an object with your honour? I am sure I can hardly get so much for mine as will hold soul and body together. You are not far from the old man's house."

She led the way accordingly, blundering over heaps of rubbish, and encountering all the embarrassments of a ruinous street, in lighting the way to Sir Aymer, who, giving his horse to one of his attendants, and desiring Fabian to be ready at a call, scrambled after as well as the slowness of his guide would permit.

Both were soon involved in the remains of the old church, much dilapidated as it had been by wanton damage done to it by the soldiery, and so much impeded by rubbish, that the knight marvelled how the old woman could find the way. She kept talking all the while as she stumbled onward. Sometimes she called out in a screeching tone, "Powheid! Lazarus Powheid!"—and then muttered—"Ay, ay, the old man will be busy with some of his duties, as he calls them; I wonder he fashes wi' them in these

times. But never mind, I warrant they will last for his day, and for mine; and the times, Lord help us! for all that I can see, are well enough for those that are to live in them."

"Are you sure, good woman," replied the knight, "that there is any inhabitant in these ruins? For my part, I should rather suppose that you are taking me to the charnel-house of the dead."

"Maybe you are right," said the old woman with a ghastly laugh; "carles and carlines agree weel with funeral vaults and charnel-houses, and when an auld bedral dwells near the dead, he is living, ye ken, among his customers—Halloo! Powheid! Lazarus Powheid! there is a gentleman would speak with you;" and she added, with some sort of emphasis, "an English noble gentleman—one of the honourable garrison."

An old man's step was now heard advancing, so slowly that the glimmering light which he held in his hand was visible on the ruined walls of the vault some time before it shewed the person who bore it.

The shadow of the old man was also projected upon the illuminated wall ere his person came in view; his dress was in considerable confusion, owing to his having been roused from his bed; and since artificial light was forbidden by the regulations of the garrison, the natives of Douglas Dale spent in sleep the time that they could not very well get rid of by any other means. The sexton was a tall thin man, emaciated by years and by privations; his body was bent habitually by his occupation of grave-digging, and his eye naturally inclined downward to

the scene of his labours. His hand sustained the cruise or little lamp, which he held so as to throw light upon his visitant; at the same time it displayed to the young knight the features of the person with whom he was now confronted, which, though neither handsome nor pleasing, were strongly marked, sagacious, and venerable, indicating, at the same time, a certain air of dignity, which age, even mere poverty, may be found occasionally to bestow, as conferring that last melancholy species of independence proper to those whose situation can hardly by any imaginable means, be rendered much worse than years and fortune have already made it. The habit of a lay brother added somewhat of religious importance to his appearance.

"What would you with me, young man?" said the sexton. "Your youthful features, and your gay dress, bespeak one who stands in need of my ministry neither for himself nor for others."

"I am indeed," replied the knight, "a living man, and therefore need not either shovel or pick-axe for my own behoof. I am not, as you see, attired in mourning, and therefore need not your offices in behalf of any friend; I would only ask you a few questions."

"What you would have done must needs be done, you being at present one of our rulers, and, as I think, a man of authority," replied the sexton; "follow me this way into my poor habitation; I have had a better in my day; and yet, Heaven knows, it is good enough for me, when many men of much greater consequence must perforce content themselves with worse."

He opened a lowly door, which was fitted, though irregularly, to serve as the entrance of a vaulted apartment, where it appeared that the old man held, apart from the living world, his wretched and solitary dwelling.* The floor, composed of paving stones, laid together with some accuracy, and here and there inscribed with letters and hieroglyphics, as if they had once upon a time served to distinguish sepulchres, was indifferently well swept, and a fire at the upper end directed its smoke into a hole which served for a chimney. The spade and pick-axe, (with other tools,) which the chamberlain of mortality makes use of, lay scattered about the apartment, and, with a rude stool or two, and a table, where some inexperienced hand had unquestionably supplied the labours of the joiner, were nearly the only furniture, if we include the old man's bed of straw, lying in a corner, and discomposed, as if he had been just raised from it. At the lower end of the apartment, the wall was almost entirely covered by a large escutcheon, such as is usually hung over the graves of men of very high rank, having the appropriate quarters, to the number of sixteen, each properly blazoned and distinct, placed as ornaments around the principal armorial coat itself.

"Let us sit," said the old man; "the posture will

* [This is a most graphic and accurate description of the present state of the ruin. Its being occupied by the sexton as a dwelling-place, and the whole scene of the old man's interview with De Valence, may be classed with our illustrious author's most felicitous imaginings.—*Note by the Rev.* MR. STEWART *of Douglas.*]

better enable my failing ears to apprehend your meaning, and the asthma will deal with me more mercifully in permitting me to make you understand mine."

A peal of short asthmatic coughs attested the violence of the disorder which he had last named, and the young knight followed his host's example, in sitting down on one of the rickety stools by the side of the fire. The old man brought from one corner of the apartment an apron, which he occasionally wore, full of broken boards in irregular pieces, some of which were covered with black cloth, or driven full of nails, black, as it might happen, or gilded.

"You will find this fresh fuel necessary," said the old man, "to keep some degree of heat within this waste apartment; nor are the vapours of mortality, with which this vault is apt to be filled, if the fire is permitted to become extinct, indifferent to the lungs of the dainty and the healthy, like your worship, though to me they are become habitual. The wood will catch fire, although it is some time ere the damps of the grave are overcome by the drier air, and the warmth of the chimney."

Accordingly, the relics of mortality with which the old man had heaped his fireplace, began by degrees to send forth a thick unctuous vapour, which at length leaped to light, and blazing up the aperture, gave a degree of liveliness to the gloomy scene. The blazonry of the huge escutcheon met and returned the rays with as brilliant a reflection as that lugubrious object was capable of, and the whole apartment looked with a fantastic gaiety, strangely

mingled with the gloomy ideas which its ornaments were calculated to impress upon the imagination.

"You are astonished," said the old man, "and perhaps, Sir Knight, you have never before seen these relics of the dead applied to the purpose of rendering the living, in some degree, more comfortable than their condition would otherwise admit of."

"Comfortable!" returned the Knight of Valence, shrugging his shoulders; "I should be sorry, old man, to know that I had a dog that was as indifferently quartered as thou art, whose grey hairs have certainly seen better days."

"It may be," answered the sexton, "and it may be otherwise; but it was not, I presume, concerning my own history that your worship seemed disposed to ask me some questions; and I would venture to enquire, therefore, to whom they have relation?"

"I will speak plainly to you," replied Sir Aymer, "and you will at once acknowledge the necessity of giving a short and distinct reply. I have even now met in the streets of this village a person only shewn to me by a single flash of light, who had the audacity to display the armorial insignia and utter the war-cry of the Douglasses; nay, if I could trust a transient glance, this daring cavalier had the features and the dark complexion proper to the Douglas. I am referred to thee as to one who possesses means of explaining this extraordinary circumstance, which, as an English knight, and one holding a charge under King Edward, I am particularly called upon to make enquiry into."

"Let me make a distinction," said the old man.

"The Douglasses of former generations are my near neighbours, and, according to my superstitious townsmen, my acquaintances and visitors; I can take it upon my conscience to be answerable for their good behaviour, and to become bound that none of the old barons, to whom the roots of that mighty tree may, it is said, be traced, will again disturb with their war-cry the towns or villages of their native country—not one will parade in moonshine the black armour which has long rusted upon their tombs.

> 'The knights are dust,
> And their good swords are rust;
> Their souls are with the saints, we trust.' *

Look around, Sir Knight, you have above and around you the men of whom we speak. Beneath us, in a little aisle, (which hath not been opened since these thin grey locks were thick and brown,) there lies the first man whom I can name as memorable

* [The author has somewhat altered part of a beautiful unpublished fragment of Coleridge:—

> "Where is the grave of Sir Arthur Orellan,—
> Where may the grave of that good knight be?
> By the marge of a brook, on the slope of Helvellyn,
> Under the boughs of a young birch-tree.
> The Oak that in Summer was pleasant to hear,
> That rustled in Autumn all withered and sear,
> That whistled and groaned thro' the Winter alone,
> He hath gone, and a birch in his place is grown.
> The knight's bones are dust,
> His good sword is rust;
> His spirit is with the saints, we trust."

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among those of this mighty line. It is he whom the Thane of Athol pointed out to the King of Scotland as Sholto Dhuglass, or the dark iron-coloured man, whose exertions had gained the battle for his native prince; and who, according to this legend, bequeathed his name to our dale and town, though others say that the race assumed the name of Douglas from the stream so called in unrecorded times, before they had their fastness on its banks. Others, his descendants, called Eachain, or Hector the first, and Orodh, or Hugh, William, the first of that name, and Gilmour, the theme of many a minstrel song, commemorating achievements done under the oriflamme of Charles the Great, Emperor of France, have all consigned themselves to their last sleep, nor has their memory been sufficiently preserved from the waste of time. Something we know concerning their great deeds, their great power, and, alas! their great crimes. Something we also know of a Lord of Douglas who sat in a parliament at Forfar, held by King Malcolm the First, and we are aware that from his attachment to hunting the wild hart, he built himself a tower called Blackhouse, in the forest of Ettrick, which perhaps still exists."

"I crave your forgiveness, old man," said the knight, "but I have no time at present to bestow upon the recitation of the pedigree of the House of Douglas. A less matter would hold a well-breathed minstrel in subject for recitation for a calendar month, Sundays and holidays included."

"What other information can you expect from me," said the sexton, "than that respecting those

heroes, some of whom it has been my lot to consign to that eternal rest which will for ever divide the dead from the duties of this world? I have told you where the race sleep, down to the reign of the royal Malcolm. I can tell you also of another vault, in which lie Sir John of Douglas-burn, with his son Lord Archibald, and a third William, known by an indenture with Lord Abernethy. Lastly, I can tell you of him to whom that escutcheon, with its appurtenances of splendour and dignity, justly belong. Do you envy that nobleman, whom, if death were in the sound, I would not hesitate to term my honourable patron? and have you any design of dishonouring his remains? It will be a poor victory! nor does it become a knight and nobleman to come in person to enjoy such a triumph over the dead, against whom, when he lived, there were few knights dared spur their horses. He fought in defence of his country, but he had not the good fortune of most of his ancestors, to die on the field of battle. Captivity, sickness, and regret for the misfortunes of his native land, brought his head to the grave in his prison-house, in the land of the stranger."

The old man's voice here became interrupted by emotion, and the English knight found it difficult to continue his examination in the stern fashion which his duty required.

"Old man," he said, "I do not require from thee this detail, which must be useless to me, as well as painful to thyself. Thou dost but thy duty in rendering justice to thy ancient lord; but thou hast not yet explained to me why I have met in this town,

this very night, and not half an hour since, a person in the arms, and bearing the complexion, of one of the Black Douglasses, who cried his war-cry as if in contempt of his conquerors."

"Surely," replied the sexton, "it is not my business to explain such a fancy, otherwise than by supposing that the natural fears of the Southron will raise the spectre of a Douglas at any time, when he is within sight of their sepulchre. Methinks, in such a night as this, the fairest cavalier would wear the complexion of this swarthy race, nor can I hold it wonderful that the war-cry which was once in the throats of so many thousands in this country, should issue upon occasion from the mouth of a single champion."

"You are bold, old man," returned the English knight; "do you consider that your life is in my power, and that it may, in certain cases, be my duty to inflict death with that degree of pain at which humanity shudders?"

The old man rose up slowly in the light of the blazing fire, displaying his emaciated features, which resembled those ascribed by artists to Saint Anthony of the desert; and pointing to the feeble lamp, which he placed upon the coarse table, thus addressed his interrogator, with an appearance of perfect firmness, and something even resembling dignity:—

"Young knight of England, you see that utensil constructed for the purpose of dispensing light amidst these fatal vaults,—it is as frail as any thing can well be, whose flame is supplied by living element, contained in a frame composed of iron. It is

doubtless in your power entirely to end its service, by destroying the frame, or extinguishing the light. Threaten it with such annihilation, Sir Knight, and see whether your menace will impress any sense of fear either on the element or the iron. Know that you have no more power over the frail mortal whom you threaten with similar annihilation. You may tear from my body the skin in which it is now swathed, but although my nerves might glow with agony during the inhuman operation, it would produce no more impression on me than flaying on the stag which an arrow has previously pierced through the heart. My age sets me beyond your cruelty: if you think otherwise, call your agents, and commence your operations; neither threats nor inflictions will enable you to extort from me any thing that I am not ready to tell you of my own accord."

"You trifle with me, old man," said De Valence; "you talk as if you possessed some secret respecting the motions of these Douglasses, who are to you as gods, yet you communicate no intelligence to me whatever."

"You may soon know," replied the old man, "all that a poor sexton has to communicate; and it will not increase your knowledge respecting the living, though it may throw some light upon my proper domains, which are those of the dead. The spirits of the deceased Douglasses do not rest in their graves during the dishonour of their monuments, and the downfall of their house. That, upon death, the greater part of any line are consigned to the regions of eternal bliss, or of never-ending misery, religion

will not suffer us to believe, and amidst a race who had so great a share of worldly triumph and prosperity, we must suppose there have existed many who have been justly subjected to the doom of an intermediate space of punishment. You have destroyed the temples which were built by their posterity to propitiate Heaven for the welfare of their souls; you have silenced the prayers and stopped the choirs, by the mediation of which the piety of children had sought to appease the wrath of Heaven in behalf of their ancestors, subjected to expiatory fires. Can you wonder that the tormented spirits, thus deprived of the relief which had been proposed to them, should not, according to the common phrase, rest in their graves? Can you wonder they should shew themselves like discontented loiterers near to the places which, but for the manner in which you have prosecuted your remorseless warfare, might have ere now afforded them rest? Or do you marvel that these fleshless warriors should interrupt your marches, and do what else their airy nature may permit to disturb your councils, and meet as far as they may the hostilities which you make it your boast to carry on, as well against those who are deceased, as against any one who may yet survive your cruelty?"

"Old man," replied Aymer de Valence, "you cannot expect that I am to take for answer a story like this, being a fiction too gross to charm to sleep a schoolboy tormented with the toothach; nevertheless, I thank God that thy doom does not remain in my hands. My squire and two archers shall carry

thee captive to the worshipful Sir John de Walton, Governor of the Castle and Valley, that he may deal with thee as seems meet; nor is he a person to believe in your apparitions and ghosts from purgatory, —What ho! Fabian! Come hither, and bring with thee two archers of the guard."

Fabian accordingly, who had waited at the entrance of the ruined building, now found his way, by the light of the old sexton's lamp, and the sound of his master's voice, into the singular apartment of the old man, the strange decorations of which struck the youth with great surprise, and some horror.

"Take the two archers with thee, Fabian," said the Knight of Valence, "and, with their assistance, convey this old man, on horseback, or in a litter, to the presence of the worshipful Sir John de Walton. Tell him what we have seen, which thou didst witness as well as I; and tell him that this old sexton, whom I send to be examined by his superior wisdom, seems to know more than he is willing to disclose respecting our ghostly cavalier, though he will give us no account of him, except intimating that he is a spirit of the old Douglasses from purgatory, to which Sir John de Walton will give what faith he pleases. You may say, that, for my part, my belief is, either that the sexton is crazed by age, want, and enthusiasm, or that he is connected with some plot which the country people are hatching. You may also say that I shall not use much ceremony with the youth under the care of the Abbot of Saint Bride; there is something suspicious in all the occurrences that are now passing around us."

Fabian promised obedience; and the knight, pulling him aside, gave him an additional caution, to behave with attention in this business, seeing he must recollect that neither the judgment of himself, nor that of his master, were apparently held in very much esteem by the governor; and that it would ill become them to make any mistake in a matter where the safety of the Castle was perhaps concerned.

"Fear me not, worshipful sir," replied the youth; "I am returning to pure air in the first place, and a good fire in the second, both acceptable exchanges for this dungeon of suffocating vapours and execrable smells. You may trust to my making no delay; a very short time will carry me back to Castle Douglas, even moving with suitable attention to this old man's bones."

"Use him humanely," answered the knight. "And thou, old man, if thou art insensible to threats of personal danger in this matter, remember, that if thou art found paltering with us, thy punishment will perhaps be more severe than any we can inflict upon thy person."

"Can you administer the torture to the soul?" said the sexton.

"As to thee," answered the knight, "we have that power; — we will dissolve every monastery or religious establishment held for the souls of these Douglasses, and will only allow the religious people to hold their residence there upon condition of their praying for the soul of King Edward the First of glorious memory, the *malleus Scotorum;* and if the Douglasses are deprived of the ghostly benefit of the

prayers and services of such shrines, they may term thy obstinacy the cause."

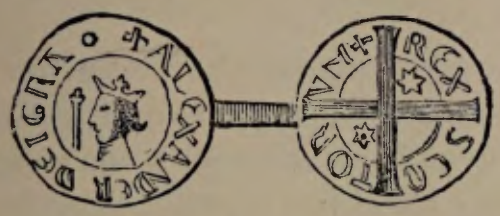
"Such a species of vengeance," answered the old man, in the same bold unsubdued tone which he had hitherto used, "were more worthy of the infernal fiends than of Christian men."

The squire raised his hand. The knight interposed: "Forbear him," he said, "Fabian, he is very old, and perhaps insane.—And you, sexton, remember that the vengeance threatened is lawfully directed towards a family which have been the obstinate supporters of the excommunicated rebel, who murdered the Red Comyn at the High Church in Dumfries."

So saying, Aymer strode out of the ruins, picking his way with much difficulty—took his horse, which he found at the entrance—repeated a caution to Fabian, to conduct himself with prudence—and, passing on to the south-western gate, gave the strongest injunctions concerning the necessity of keeping a vigilant watch, both by patrols and by sentinels, intimating, at the same time, that it must have been neglected during the preceding part of the evening. The men murmured an apology, the confusion of which seemed to express that there had existed some occasion for the reprimand.

Sir Aymer then proceeded on his journey to Hazelside, his train diminished by the absence of Fabian and his assistants. After a hasty, but not a short journey, the knight alighted at Thomas Dickson's, where he found the detachment from Ayr had arrived before him, and were snugly housed for the

night. He sent one of the archers to announce his approach to the Abbot of Saint Bride and his young guest, intimating at the same time, that the archer must keep sight of the latter until he himself arrived at the chapel, which would be instantly.



HALFPENNY OF ALEXANDER III.

SEAL OF EDWARD I.

CHAPTER THE TENTH.

When the nightengale singes, the wodes waxes grene,
Lef, and gras, and blosme, springeth in April I wene,
And love is to myne herte gone with one speare so kene.
Night and day my blood hyt drynkes, mine herte deth me tene
MSS. HAIL. *Quoted by Warton.*

SIR AYMER DE VALENCE had no sooner followed his archer to the convent of Saint Bride, than he summoned the abbot to his presence, who came with the air of a man who loves his ease, and who is suddenly called from the couch where he has consigned himself to a comfortable repose, at the summons of one whom he does not think it safe to disobey, and to whom he would not disguise his sense of peevishness, if he durst.

"It is a late ride," he said, "which has brought

your worthy honour hither from the castle. May I be informed of the cause, after the arrangement so recently gone into with the governor?"

"It is my hope," replied the knight, "that you, Father Abbot, are not already conscious of it; suspicions are afloat, and I myself have this night seen something to confirm them, that some of the obstinate rebels of this country are again setting afoot dangerous practices, to the peril of the garrison; and I come, father, to see whether, in requital of many favours received from the English monarch, you will not merit his bounty and protection, by contributing to the discovery of the designs of his enemies."

"Assuredly so," answered Father Jerome, in an agitated voice. "Most unquestionably my information should stand at your command; that is, if I knew any thing the communication of which could be of advantage to you."

"Father Abbot," replied the English knight, "although it is rash to make myself responsible for a North-country man in these times, yet I own I do consider you as one who has ever been faithfully subject to the King of England, and I willingly hope that you will still continue so."

"And a fine encouragement I have!" said the abbot; "to be called out of my bed at midnight, in this raw weather, to undergo the examination of a knight, who is the youngest, perhaps, of his own honourable rank, and who will not tell me the subject of the interrogatories, but detains me on this cold pavement, till, according to the opinion of Celsus, the

podagra which lurks in my feet may be driven into my stomach, and then good-night to abbacy and examinations from henceforward."

"Good father," said the young man, "the spirit of the times must teach thee patience; recollect that I can feel no pleasure in this duty, and that if an insurrection should take place, the rebels, who are sufficiently displeased with thee for acknowledging the English monarch, would hang thee from thine own steeple to feed the crows; or that, if thou hast secured thy peace by some private compact with the insurgents, the English governor, who will sooner or later gain the advantage, will not fail to treat thee as a rebel to his sovereign."

"It may appear to you, my noble son," answered the abbot, obviously discomposed, "that I am hung up, in this case, on the horns of the dilemma which you have stated; nevertheless, I protest to you, that if any one accuses me of conspiring with the rebels against the King of England, I am ready, provided you give me time to swallow a potion recommended by Celsus in my perilous case, to answer with the most perfect sincerity every question which you can put to me upon that subject." So saying, he called upon a monk who had attended at his levee, and giving him a large key, whispered something in his ear. The cup which the monk brought, was of such capacity as proved Celsus's draught required to be administered in considerable quantity, and a strong smell which it spread through the apartment, accredited the knight's suspicion that the medicine chiefly consisted of what were then termed distilled waters, a

preparation known in the monasteries for some time before that comfortable secret had reached the laity in general. The abbot, neither overawed by the strength nor by the quantity of the potion, took it off with what he himself would have called a feeling of solace and pleasance, and his voice became much more composed; he signified himself as comforted extraordinarily by the medicine, and willing to proceed to answer any questions which could be put to him by his gallant young friend.

"At present," said the knight, "you are aware, father, that strangers travelling through this country, must be the first objects of our suspicions and enquiries. What is, for example, your own opinion of the youth termed Augustine, the son, or calling himself so, of a person called Bertram the minstrel, who has resided for some days in your convent?"

The abbot heard the question with eyes expressive of surprise at the quarter from which it came.

"Assuredly," said he, "I think of him as a youth who, from anything I have seen, is of that excellent disposition, both with respect to loyalty and religion, which I should have expected, were I to judge from the estimable person who committed him to my care."

With this the abbot bowed to the knight, as if he had conceived that this repartee gave him a silencing advantage in any question which could follow upon that subject; and he was probably, therefore, surprised when Sir Aymer replied as follows:

"It is very true, Father Abbot, that I myself did recommend this stripling to you as a youth of a

harmless disposition, and with respect to whom it would be unnecessary to exercise the strict vigilance extended to others in similar circumstances; but the evidence which seemed to me to vouch for this young man's innocence, has not appeared so satisfactory to my superior and commander; and it is by his orders that I now make farther inquiries of you. You must think they are of consequence, since we again trouble you, and at so unwonted an hour."

"I can only protest by my order, and by the veil of Saint Bride," replied the abbot, the spirit of Celsus appearing to fail his pupil, "that whatever evil may be in this matter, is totally unknown to me —nor could it be extorted from me by racks or implements of torture. Whatever signs of disloyalty may have been evinced by this young man I have witnessed none of them, although I have been strictly attentive to his behaviour."

"In what respect?" said the knight—"and what is the result of your observation?"

"My answer," said the Abbot of Saint Bride, "shall be sincere and downright. The youth condescended upon payment of a certain number of gold crowns, not by any means to repay the hospitality of the church of Saint Bride, but merely——"

"Nay, father," interrupted the knight, "you may cut that short, since the governor and I well understand the terms upon which the monks of Saint Bride exercise their hospitality. In what manner, it is more necessary to ask, was it received by this boy?"

"With the utmost gentleness and moderation,

noble sir," answered the abbot; "indeed it appeared to me, at first, that he might be a troublesome guest, since the amount of his benevolence to the convent was such as to encourage, and, in some degree, to authorise, his demanding accommodation of a kind superior to what we had to bestow."

"In which case," said Sir Aymer, "you would have had the discomfort of returning some part of the money you had received?"

"That," replied the abbot, "would have been a mode of settlement contrary to our vows. What is paid to the treasury of Saint Bridget cannot, agreeably to our rule, be on any account restored. But, noble knight, there was no occasion for this; a crust of white bread and a draught of milk were diet sufficient to nourish this poor youth for a day, and it was my own anxiety for his health that dictated the furnishing of his cell with a softer bed and coverlet than are quite consistent with the rules of our order."

"Now hearken to what I say, Sir Abbot, and answer me truly," said the Knight of Valence,—"What communication has this youth held with the inmates of your convent, or with those beyond your house? Search your memory concerning this, and let me have a distinct answer; for your guest's safety and your own depend upon it."

"As I am a Christian man," said the abbot, "I have observed nothing which could give ground for your worship's suspicions. The boy Augustine, unlike those whom I have observed who have been educated in the world, shewed a marked preference to the company of such sisters as the house of

Saint Bride contains, rather than for that of the monks, my brethren, although there are among them pleasant and conversable men."

"Scandal," said the young knight, "might find a reason for that preference."

"Not in the case of the sisters of Saint Bridget," said the abbot, "most of whom have been either sorely misused by time, or their comeliness destroyed by some mishap previously to their being received into the seclusion of the house."

This observation the good father made with some internal movement of mirth, which was apparently excited at the idea of the sisterhood of Saint Bridget becoming attractive to any one by dint of their personal beauty, in which, as it happened, they were all notably, and almost ludicrously, deficient. The English knight, to whom the sisterhood were well known, felt also inclined to smile at this conversation.

"I acquit," he said, "the pious sisterhood of charming, otherwise than by their kind wishes, and attention to the wants of the suffering stranger."

"Sister Beatrice," continued the father, resuming his gravity, "is indeed blessed with a winning gift of making comfits and syllabubs; but, on minute enquiry, I do not find that the youth has tasted any of them. Neither is sister Ursula so hard-favoured by nature, as from the effects of an accident; but your honour knows that when a woman is ugly, the men do not trouble themselves about the cause of her hard favour. I will go, with your leave, and see in what state the youth now is, and summon him before you."

"I request you to do so, father, for the affair is instant: and I earnestly advise you to watch, in the closest manner, this Augustine's behaviour: you cannot be too particular. I will wait your return, and either carry the boy to the castle, or leave him here, as circumstances may seem to require."

The abbot bowed, promised his utmost exertions, and hobbled out of the room to wait on the youth Augustine in his cell, anxious to favour, if possible, the wishes of De Valence, whom he looked upon as rendered by circumstances his military patron.

He remained long absent, and Sir Aymer began to be of opinion that the delay was suspicious, when the abbot returned with perplexity and discomposure in his countenance.

"I crave your pardon for keeping your worship waiting," said Jerome, with much anxiety; "but I have myself been detained and vexed by unnecessary formalities and scruples on the part of this peevish boy. In the first place, hearing my foot approaching his bedroom, my youth, instead of undoing the door, which would have been but proper respect to my place, on the contrary draws a strong bolt on the inside; and this fastening, forsooth, has been placed on his chamber by Ursula's command, that his slumbers might be suitably respected. I intimated to him, as I best could, that he must attend you without delay, and prepare to accompany you to the Castle of Douglas; but he would not answer a single word, save recommending to me patience, to which I was fain to have recourse, as well as your archer, whom I found standing sentinel before the

door of the Cell, and contenting himself with the assurance of the sisters that there was no other passage by which Augustine could make his escape. At length the door opens, and my young master presents himself fully arrayed for his journey. The truth is, I think some fresh attack of his malady has affected the youth; he may perhaps be disturbed with some touch of hypochondria, or black choler, a species of dotage of the mind, which is sometimes found concomitant with and symptomatic of this disorder; but he is at present composed, and if your worship chooses to see him, he is at your command."

"Call him hither," said the knight. And a considerable space of time again elapsed ere the eloquence of the abbot, half chiding and half soothing, prevailed on the lady, in her adopted character, to approach the parlour, in which at last she made her appearance, with a countenance on which the marks of tears might still be discovered, and a pettish sullenness, like that of a boy, or, with reverence, that of a girl, who is determined upon taking her own way in any matter, and equally resolved to give no reason for her doing so. Her hurried levée had not prevented her attending closely to all the mufflings and disguisings by which her pilgrim's dress was arranged, so as to alter her appearance, and effectually disguise her sex. But as civility prevented her wearing her large slouched hat, she necessarily exposed her countenance more than in the open air; and though the knight beheld a most lovely set of features, yet they were not such as were inconsist-

ent with the character she had adopted, and which she had resolved upon maintaining to the last. She had, accordingly, mustered up a degree of courage which was not natural to her, and which she perhaps supported by hopes which her situation hardly admitted. So soon as she found herself in the same apartment with De Valence, she assumed a style of manners, bolder and more determined than she had hitherto displayed.

"Your worship," she said, addressing him even before he spoke, "is a knight of England, and possessed, doubtless, of the virtues which become that noble station. I am an unfortunate lad, obliged, by reasons which I am under the necessity of keeping secret, to travel in a dangerous country, where I am suspected, without any just cause, of becoming accessory to plots and conspiracies which are contrary to my own interest, and which my very soul abhors; and which I might safely abjure, by imprecating upon myself all the curses of our religion and renouncing all its promises, if I were accessory to such designs, in thought, word, or deed. Nevertheless, you, who will not believe my solemn protestations, are about to proceed against me as a guilty person, and in so doing I must warn you, Sir Knight, that you will commit a great and cruel injustice."

"I shall endeavour to avoid that," said the knight, "by referring the duty to Sir John de Walton, the governor, who will decide what is to be done; in this case, my only duty will be to place you in his hands at Douglas Castle."

"Must you do this?" said Augustine.

"Certainly," replied the knight, "or be answerable for neglecting my duty."

"But if I become bound to answer your loss with a large sum of money, a large tract of land——"

"No treasure, no land,—supposing such at your disposal," answered the knight, "can atone for disgrace; and, besides, boy, how should I trust to your warrant, were my avarice such as would induce me to listen to such proposals?"

"I must then prepare to attend you instantly to the Castle of Douglas and the presence of Sir John de Walton?" replied Augustine.

"Young man," answered De Valence, "there is no remedy, since if you delay me longer, I must carry you thither by force."

"What will be the consequence to my father?" said the youth.

"That," replied the knight, "will depend exactly on the nature of your confession and his; something you both have to say, as is evident from the terms of the letter Sir John de Walton conveyed to you; and I assure you, you were better to speak it out at once than to risk the consequences of more delay. I can admit of no more trifling; and, believe me, that your fate will be entirely ruled by your own frankness and candour."

"I must prepare, then, to travel at your command," said the youth. "But this cruel disease still hangs around me, and Abbot Jerome, whose leechcraft is famous, will himself assure you that I cannot travel without danger of my life; and that while I was residing in this convent, I declined every oppor-

tunity of exercise which was offered me by the kindness of the garrison at Hazelside, lest I might by mishap bring the contagion among your men."

"The youth says right," said the abbot; "the archers and men-at-arms have more than once sent to invite this lad to join in some of their military games, or to amuse them, perhaps, with some of his minstrelsy; but he has uniformly declined doing so; and, according to my belief, it is the effects of this disorder which have prevented his accepting an indulgence so natural to his age, and in so dull a place as the convent of Saint Bride must needs seem to a youth bred up in the world."

"Do you then hold, reverend father," said Sir Aymer, "that there is real danger in carrying this youth to the castle to-night, as I proposed?"

"I conceive such danger," replied the abbot, "to exist, not only as it may occasion the relapse of the poor youth himself, but as particularly likely, no preparations having been made, to introduce the infection among your honourable garrison; for it is in these relapses, more than in the first violence of the malady, that it has been found most contagious."

"Then," said the knight, "you must be content, my friend, to give a share of your room to an archer, by way of sentinel."

"I cannot object," said Augustine, "provided my unfortunate vicinity does not endanger the health of the poor soldier."

"He will be as ready to do his duty," said the abbot, "without the door of the apartment as within it; and if the youth should sleep soundly, which the

presence of a guard in his chamber might prevent, he is the more likely to answer your purpose on the morrow."

"Let it be so," said Sir Aymer; "so you are sure that you do not minister any facility of escape."

"The apartment," said the monk, "hath no other entrance than that which is guarded by the archer, but, to content you, I shall secure the door in your presence."

"So be it, then," said the Knight of Valence; "this done, I myself will lie down without doffing my mail-shirt, and snatch a sleep till the ruddy dawn calls me again to duty, when you, Augustine, will hold yourself ready to attend me to our Castle of Douglas."

The bells of the convent summoned the inhabitants and inmates of Saint Bride to morning prayers at the first peep of day. When this duty was over, the knight demanded his prisoner. The abbot marshalled him to the door of Augustine's chamber. The sentinel who was stationed there, armed with a brown-bill, or species of partisan, reported that he had heard no motion in the apartment during the whole night. The abbot tapped at the door, but received no answer. He knocked again louder, but the silence was unbroken from within.

"What means this?" said the reverend ruler of the convent of Saint Bride; "my young patient has certainly fallen into a syncope or swoon!"

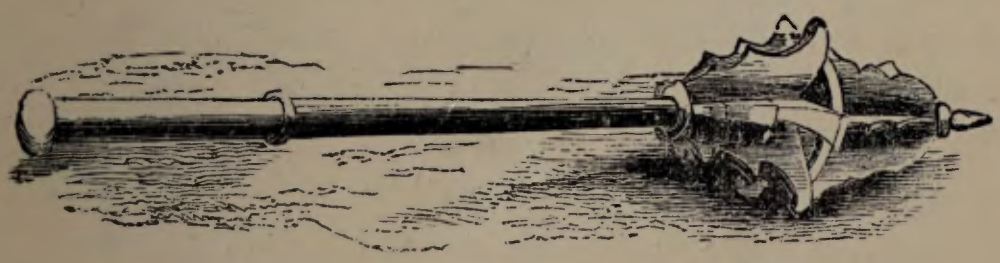
"I wish, Father Abbot," said the knight, "that he may not have made his escape instead, an accident which both you and I may be required to answer, since, according to our strict duty, we ought to have

kept sight of him, and detained him in close custody until daybreak."

"I trust your worship," said the abbot, "only anticipates a misfortune which I cannot think possible."

"We shall speedily see," said the knight; and raising his voice, he called aloud, so as to be heard within, "Bring crow-bars and levers, and burst me that door into splinters without an instant's delay."

The loudness of his voice, and the stern tone in which he spoke, soon brought around him the brethren of the house, and two or three soldiers of his own party, who were already busy in caparisoning their horses. The displeasure of the young knight was manifested by his flushed features, and the abrupt manner in which he again repeated his commands for breaking open the door. This was speedily performed, though it required the application of considerable strength, and as the shattered remains fell crashing into the apartment, De Valence sprung, and the abbot hobbled, into the cell of the prisoner, which, to the fulfilment of their worst suspicions, they found empty.



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